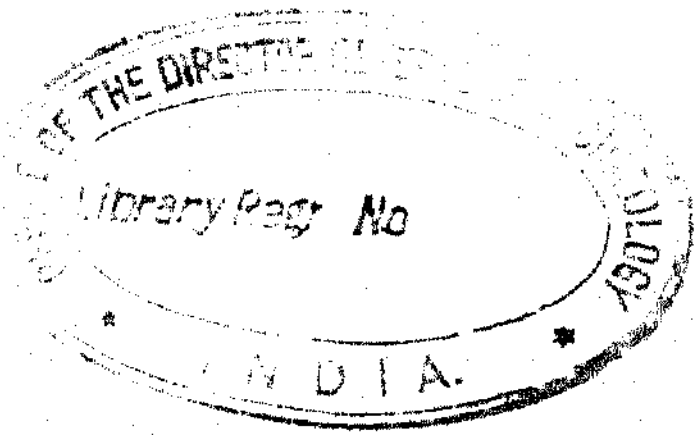
THE

ASSEMBLIES OF AL ḤARÎRI



THE

ASSEMBLIES OF AL ḤARÎRI,

TRANSLATED FROM THE ARABIC,

WITH AN INTRODUCTION,

AND

NOTES

HISTORICAL AND GRAMMATICAL.

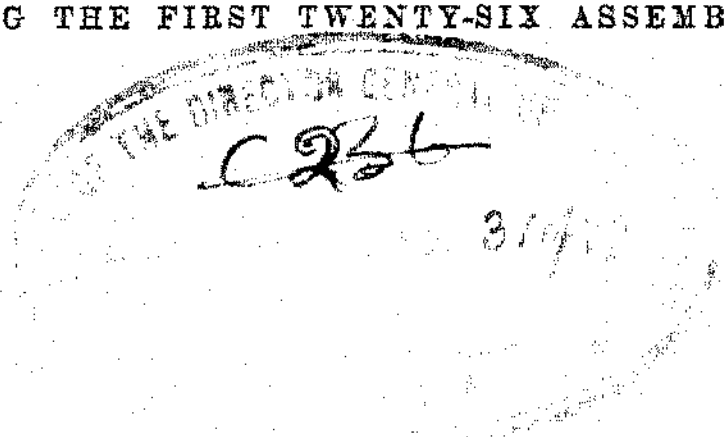
BY

THOMAS CHENERY M.A.,

OF LINCOLN'S INN, BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

VOL. I.

CONTAINING THE FIRST TWENTY-SIX ASSEMBLIES.



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THE PREFACE OF AL ḤARÎRI.

IN THE NAME OF GOD THE MERCIFUL, MOST MERCIFUL.

SAID the Excellent, the Incomparable, Abû Moḥammed al Ḳâsim ibn 'Alî ibn Moḥammed ibn 'Othmân Al Ḥarîri of Baṣrah (God cool his resting-place).

O GOD, we praise thee for what perspicuity thou hast taught, and what enunciation thou hast inspired; as we praise thee for what bounty thou hast enlarged, what mercy thou hast diffused:—And we take refuge with thee from the vehemence of fluency and the immoderation of talkativeness, as we take refuge with thee from the vice of inarticulateness and the shame of hesitation.—And by thee we seek to be kept from temptation through the flattery of the praiser and the connivance of the favourer, as we seek to be kept from exposure to the defaming of the slanderer and the betrayal of the informer.—And we ask pardon of thee if our desires carry us into the region of ambiguities, as we ask pardon if our steps advance to the domain of errors.—And we ask of thee succour which shall lead us aright, and a heart turning with justice, and a tongue adorned with truth, and a speech strengthened with demonstration, and accuracy that shall keep us from mistake, and resolution that shall conquer caprice, and perception by

which we may estimate duly:—And that thou wilt help us by thy guidance to conceive, and enable us by thy assistance to express;—That thou wilt guard us from error in narration, and turn us from unseemliness in jesting;—That we may be secure from slanders of the tongue; that we may be free from the ill of tinselled speech;—That we walk not in the road of sin, nor stand in the place of repentance:—That we be not pursued by suit or censure, nor need to flee from hastiness to excuse.—O God, fulfil to us this wish; give us to attain to this desire: put us not forth of thy large shadow, make us not a morsel for the devourer.—For now we stretch forth to thee the hand of entreaty; we are thorough in humiliation to thee and abasement.—And we call down thy abundant grace and thy bounty that is over all, with humbleness of seeking and with the venture of hope.—Also approaching thee through the merits of Mohammed, Lord of men, the Intercessor whose intercession shall be received at the congregation of judgment.—By whom thou hast set the seal to the prophets, and whose degree thou hast exalted to the highest heaven:—Whom thou hast described in thy clear-speaking Book, and hast said (and thou art the most truthful of sayers): "It is the word of a noble envoy, of him who is mighty in the presence of the Lord of the throne, having authority, obeyed, yea, faithful."—O God, send thy blessing on him and his House who guide aright, and his companions who built up the faith; and make us followers of his guidance and theirs, and profit us all by the loving of him and them: for thou art Almighty, and one meet to answer prayer.

And now: In a meeting devoted to that learning

whose breeze has stilled in this age, whose lights are nigh gone out—There ran a mention of the Assemblies which had been invented by Badî' az Zemân, the sage of Hamadân (God shew him mercy);—In which he had referred the composition to Abû'l Fatḥ of Alexandria and the relation to 'Îsa, son of Hishâm.—And both these are persons obscure, not known; vague, not to be recognized.—Then suggested to me one whose suggestion is as a decree, and obedience to whom is as a prize,—That I should compose Assemblies, following in them the method of Badî' (although the lame steed attains not to outrun like the stout one).—Then I reminded him of what is said concerning him who joins even two words, or strings together one or two verses:—And deprecated this position in which the understanding is bewildered, and the fancy misses aim, and the depth of the intelligence is probed, and a man's real value is made manifest:—And in which one is forced to be as a wood-gatherer by night, or as he who musters footmen and horsemen together:—Considering, too, that the voluble man is seldom secure or pardoned if he trips.—But when he consented not to forbearance, and freed me not from his demand, I assented to his invitation with the assenting of the obedient, and displayed in according with him all my endeavour;—And composed, in spite of what I suffered from frozen genius, and dimmed intelligence, and failing judgment, and afflicting cares,—Fifty Assemblies, comprising what is serious in language and lively, what is delicate in expression and dignified; the brilliancies of eloquence and its pearls, the beauties of scholarship and its rarities:—Besides what I have adorned them with of verses of the Koran and goodly

metonymies, and studded them with of Arab proverbs, and scholarly elegancies, and grammatical riddles, and decisions dependent on the meaning of words, and original addresses, and ornate orations, and tear-moving exhortations, and amusing jests:—All of which I have indited as by the tongue of Abû Zayd of Serûj, while I have attributed the relating of them to Al Ḥârith son of Hammâm, of Basra.—And whenever I change the pasture I have no purpose but to inspirit the reader, and to increase the number of those who shall seek my book.—And of the poetry of others I have introduced nothing but two single verses, on which I have based the fabric of the Assembly of Ḥolwân; and two others, in a couplet, which I have inserted at the conclusion of the Assembly of Kerej.—And, as for the rest, my own mind is the father of its virginity, the author of its sweet and its bitter.—Yet I acknowledge withal that Badî' (God shew him mercy) is a mighty passer of goals, a worker of wonders;—And that he who assays after him to the composition of an Assembly, even though he be gifted with the eloquence of Ḳodâmeh,—Does but scoop up of his overflow, and travels that path only by his guidance.—And excellently said one:—

If before it mourned, I had mourned my love for Su'da, then should I have healed my soul, nor had afterwards to repent.

But it mourned before me, and its mourning excited mine, and I said, "The superiority is to the one that is first."

Now I hope I shall not be, in respect of the playful style that I display, and the source that I repair to, like the beast that scratched up its death with its hoof, or he who cut off his nose with his own hand;—So as to be joined to those who are "most of all losers in their

works, whose course on earth has been in vain, while they count that they have done fair deeds."—Since I know that although he who is intelligent and liberal will connive at me, and he who is friendly and partial may defend me,—I can hardly escape from the simpleton who is ignorant, or the spiteful man who feigns ignorance;—Who will detract from me on account of this composition, and will give out that it is among the things forbidden of the law.—But yet, whoever scans matters with the eye of intelligence, and makes good his insight into principles—Will rank these Assemblies in the order of useful writings, and class them with the fables that relate to brutes and lifeless objects.—Now none was ever heard of whose hearing shrank from such tales, or who held as sinful those who related them at ordinary times.—Moreover, since deeds depend on intentions, and in these lies the effectiveness of religious obligations,—What fault is there in one who composes stories for instruction not for display, and whose purpose in them is the education and not the fablings?—Nay, is he not in the position of one who assents to doctrine, and "guides to the right path?"

Yet am I content if I may carry my caprice, and then be quit of it, without any debt against me or to me.

And of God I seek to be helped in what I purpose, and to be kept from that which makes defective, and to be led to that which leads aright.—For there is no refuge but to Him, and no seeking of succour but in Him, and no prospering but from Him, and no sanctuary but He.—On Him I rely, and to Him I have recourse.

THE FIRST ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF SAN'Â."

In this Assembly Al Ḥârith arrives in the town of Ṣan'â in Yemen, in great poverty; and, while seeking relief, encounters a crowd, which is gathered about a preacher. The discourse is a stern warning against self-indulgence, and an exhortation to repentance. Ḥârith, wishing to learn who the preacher is, follows him to a cave, and there finds him enjoying himself with good food, and even with wine. He begins to rebuke him, but the preacher, throwing off disguise, extemporizes some lines, confessing that his preaching was only a device to obtain charity. Ḥârith asks the attendant the name of the preacher, and is told that he is Abû Zayd, of Serûj. This Assembly is placed first because in it Ḥârith is represented as unacquainted with Abû Zayd, though the first Assembly composed by Ḥariri is said to be that called Al Ḥarâmîyeh, which is placed forty-eighth in the collection.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related:—When I mounted the hump of exile, and misery removed me from my fellows, the shocks of the time cast me to Ṣan'â of Yemen.—And I entered it with wallets empty, manifest in my need; I had not a meal; I found not in my sack a mouthful.—Then began I to traverse its ways like one crazed, and to roam in its depths as roams the thirsting bird.—And wherever ranged my glances, wherever ran my goings at morn or even,—I sought some generous man before whom I might fray the tissue of my countenance, to whom I might be open concerning my need;—Or one well bred, whose aspect might dispel my pain, whose anecdote might relieve my thirsting.—Until the close of my circuit brought me, and the overture of courtesy guided me, to a wide place of concourse, in which was a throng and a wailing.—Then I entered the thicket of the crowd to explore what was drawing forth tears.—And I saw in the middle of the ring a

person slender of make;—Upon him was the equipment of pilgrimage, and he had the voice of lamentation.—And he was studding cadences with the jewels of his wording, and striking hearings with the reproofs of his admonition.—And now the medley of the crowds had surrounded him, as the halo surrounds the moon, or the shell the fruit.—So I crept towards him, that I might catch of his profitable sayings, and gather up of his gems.—And I heard him say, as he coursed along in his career, and the throat of his improvisation made utterance:—

O thou reckless in petulance, trailing the garment of vanity! O thou headstrong in follies, turning aside to idle tales!—How long wilt thou persevere in thine error, and eat sweetly of the pasture of thy wrong?—How far wilt thou be extreme in thy pride, and not abstain from thy wantonness?—Thou provokest by thy rebellion the Master of thy forelock; in the foulness of thy behaving thou goest boldly against the Knower of thy secret.—Thou hidest thyself from thy neighbour, but thou art in the sight of thy Watcher; thou concealest from thy slave, but no hidden thing is hidden from thy Ruler.—Thinkest thou that thy state will profit thee when thy departure draweth near? or that thy wealth will deliver thee when thy deeds destroy thee? or that thy repentance will suffice for thee when thy foot slippeth? or that thy kindred will lean to thee in the day that thy judgment place gathereth thee?—How is it thou hast not walked in the high-road of guidance, and hastened the treatment of thy disease, and blunted the edge of thine iniquity, and restrained thyself—thy chief enemy? Is not death thy doom? What then

is thy preparation? Is not grey hair thy warning? What then is thy excuse? And in the grave's niche thy sleeping place? What dost thou say? And to God thy going? and who shall be thy defender?—Oft hath the time awakened thee, but thou hast set thyself to slumber; and admonition hath drawn thee, but thou hast strained against it; and warnings have been manifest to thee, but thou hast made thyself blind; and truth hath been established to thee, but thou hast disputed it; and death hath bid thee remember, but thou hast sought to forget; and it hath been in thy power to impart of good, but thou hast not imparted.—Thou preferrest money which thou mayest hoard before piety which thou mayest keep in mind: thou choosest a castle thou mayest rear rather than bounty thou mayest confer.—Thou inclinest from the guide from whom thou mightest get guidance, to the pelf thou mayest gain as a gift; thou lettest the love of the raiment thou covetest overcome the recompence thou mightest earn.—The rubies of gifts cling to thy heart more than the seasons of prayer; and the heightening of dowries is preferred with thee to continuance in almsgivings.—The dishes of many meats are more desired of thee than the leaves of doctrines: the jesting of comrades is more cheerful to thee than the reading of the Koran.—Thou commandest to righteousness, but violatest its sanctuary: thou forbiddest from deceit, but refrainest not thyself: thou turnest men from oppression, and then thou drawest near to it; thou fearest mankind, but God is more worthy that thou shouldest fear him. Then he recited—

Woe to him who seeks the world, and turns to it his careering:
And recovers not from his greediness for it, and the excess of his love.

Oh, if he were wise, but a drop of what he seeks would content him.

Then he laid his dust, and let his spittle subside; and put his bottle on his arm, and his staff under his arm-pit.—And when the company gazed on his uprising, and saw that he equipped himself to move away from the midst—Each of them put his hand into his bosom, and filled for him a bucket from his stream:—And said, "Use this for thy spending, or divide it among thy friends."—And he received it with half-closed eyes, and turned away from them, giving thanks;—And began to take leave of whoever would escort him, that his road might be hidden from them; and to dismiss whoever would follow him, that his dwelling might be unknown.—Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammân: Now I went after him, concealing from him my person; and followed on his track from where he could not see me;—Until he came to a cave, and slipped into it suddenly.—So I waited for him till he put off his sandals and washed his feet, and then I ran in upon him;—And found him sitting opposite an attendant, at some white bread and a roast kid, and over against them was a jar of date wine.—And I said to him, "Sirrah, was that thy story, and is this thy reality?"—But he puffed the puff of heat and went near to burst with rage; and ceased not to stare at me till I thought he would leap upon me.—But when his fire was allayed, and his flame hid itself, he recited:—

I don the black robe to seek my meal, and I fix my hook in the hardest prey:

And of my preaching I make a noose, and steal with it against the chaser and the chased.

Fortune has forced me to make way even to the lion of the thicket by the subtlety of my beguiling.

Yet do I not fear its change, nor does my loin quiver at it:
Nor does a covetous mind lead me to water at any well that will soil my honour.
Now if Fortune were just in its decree it would not empower the worthless with authority.

Then he said to me, "Come and eat; or, if thou wilt, rise and tell."—But I turned to his attendant, and said, "I conjure thee, by Him through whom harm is deprecated, that thou tell me who is this."—He said, "This is Abû Zayd, of Serûj, the Light of Foreigners, the Crown of the Learned."—Then I turned back to whence I came, and was extreme in wonder at what I saw.

THE SECOND ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF ḤOLWÂN."

In this Assembly the author displays more than his usual rhetorical subtlety, and while there is none more admired by those whose taste has been formed on Eastern models, there is none which appears more extravagant to the European student. Alliterations, verbal caprices, far-fetched expressions, and the puerile conceits which were usual among poets of the age, so abound, that we may almost imagine the author to be desirous of satirizing what he professes to imitate. The subject is as follows:—Ḥârith in his passion for the society of literary persons makes his way to Ḥolwân, a town in Irak, on the mountains east of Bagdad, and a resort of the higher classes from the heat of the capital. Here he meets with Abû Zayd, who is pursuing his calling of improvisatore and mendicant under various disguises, and enjoys for a long time his company and literary guidance. Abû Zayd, however, disappears, and Ḥârith returns to his native place, Basra, where after a time he again meets Abû Zayd in the public library, among a crowd of dilettanti who are discussing the beauties of the popular poets. The admiration of one is especially excited by a line in which the teeth of a lady are compared to pearls and hailstones, and the white petals of a flower; and Abû Zayd instantly produces a number of comparisons in the same style, which give him a high place in the esteem of those present, when they are assured that he is really the author of them.

They reward him, and the Assembly concludes by his reciting to Ḥârith, who had recognised him, some lines on the fickleness of fortune.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: Ever since my amulets were doffed and my turbans were donned, I was eager to visit learning's seat and to jade to it the camels of seeking.—That through it I might cleave to what would be my ornament among men, my rain-cloud in thirst.—And through the excess of my longing to kindle at it, and my desire to robe myself in its raiment,—I discussed with every one, great and small, and sought my draught both of the rain-flood and the dew, and solaced myself with hope and desire.—Now when I descended at Ḥolwân, and had already tried the brethren, and tested their values, and proved what was worthless or fine;—I found there Abû Zayd of Serûj, shifting among the varieties of pedigree, beating about in various courses of gain-getting;—For at one time he claimed to be of the race of Sâsân, and at another he made himself kin to the princes of Ghassân; and now he sallied forth in the vesture of poets; and anon he put on the pride of nobles.—And yet with all this diversifying of his condition, and this display of contradiction,—He is adorned with grace and information, and courtesy and knowledge, and astonishing eloquence, and obedient improvisation, and excelling accomplishments, and a foot that mounts the hills of the sciences.—Now, through his goodly attainments he is associated with in spite of his faults; and through the largeness of his information there is a fondness for the sight of him; and through the blandishment of his fair-speaking men are loath to oppose him; and through the sweetness of his address he is helped to his

desire.—Then I clung to his skirts for the sake of his peculiar accomplishments, and valued highly his affection by reason of his precious qualities.

With him I wiped away my cares, and beheld my fortune displayed to me, open of face, gleaming with light.

I looked upon his nearness to me as kinship, his abiding as wealth, his aspect as a full draught, his life as rain.

Thus we remained a long season; he produced for me daily some pleasantness, and drove some doubt from my heart,—Until the hand of want mixed for him the cup of parting, and the lack of a meal urged him to abandon Irak;—And the failures of supply cast him into desert regions, and the waving of the banner of distress ranged him in the line of travellers;—And he sharpened for departure the edge of determination, and journeyed away, drawing my heart with his leading cord.

After he was gone none pleased me who kept by me, none filled me with affection by urging me to intimacy.

Since he strayed away none has appeared to me his like in excellence; no friend has gotten the equal of his qualities.

So he was hidden from me a season: I knew not his lair; I found none to tell of him;—But when I had returned from my wandering to the place where my branch had sprouted,—I was once present in the town library, which is the council-hall of scholars, the meeting place of residents and strangers:—Then there entered one with a thick beard and a squalid aspect,—And he saluted those who sat, and took seat in the last rows of the people.—Then began he to produce what was in his wallet, and to astonish those present by the sagacity of his judgment.—And he said to the man who was next him, "What is the book into which thou lookest?"—He said, "The poems of Abû 'Obâdeh; him of whose ex-

cellence men bear witness."—He said, "In what thou hast seen hast thou hit on any fine thing which thou admirest?"—He said, "Yes; the line

As though she smiled from strung pearls or hailstones, or camomile flowers.

For it is original in the use of similitude which it contains."—He said to him, "Here is a wonder! here is a lack of taste,—Sir, thou hast taken for fat what is only swollen, thou hast blown on that which is no fuel:—Where art thou in comparison with the rare verse which unites the similitudes of the teeth?

My life a ransom for those teeth whose beauty charms, and which a purity adorns sufficing thee for all other.

She parts her lips from fresh pearls, and from hail-stones, and from camomile flowers, and from the palm shoot, and from bubbles.

Then each one approved the couplet and admired it, and bade him repeat it and dictate it.—And he was asked, "Whose is this verse, and is its author living or dead?"—He said, "By Allah, Right is most worthy to be followed, and truth is most fitting to be listened to:—Know, friends, that it is his who talks with you today."—Said Al Harith: Now it was as though the company doubted of his fathering, and were unwilling to give credit to his claim.—And he perceived what had fallen into their thoughts, and was aware of their inward unbelief;—And was afraid that blame might chance to him, or ill-fame reach him;—So he quoted from the Koran, "Some suspicions are a sin."—Then he said, "O ye reciters of verse, physicians of sickly phrase!—Truly the purity of the gem is shown by the testing, and the hand of truth rends the cloak of doubt.—Now it was said aforetime that by trial is a man honoured or con-

temned.—So come! I now expose my hidden store to the proving, I offer my saddle-bag for comparison."—Then hastened one who was there and said: "I know a verse such that there is no weaving on its beam, such that no genius can supply one after its image.—Now, if thou wish to draw our hearts to thee, compose after this style:—

She rained pearls from the daffodil, and watered the rose, and bit upon the 'unnâb with hailstone.

And it was but the glance of an eye, or less, before he recited rarely:—

I asked her when she met me to put off her crimson veil, and to endow my hearing with the sweetest of tidings:
And she removed the ruddy light which covered the brightness of her moon, and she dropped pearls from a perfumed ring.

Then all present were astonished at his readiness, and acknowledged his honesty.—And when he perceived that they approved his diction, and were hastening into the path of honouring him,—He looked down the twinkling of an eye; then he said, "Here are two other verses for you;" and recited:—

She came on the day when departure afflicted, in black robes, biting her fingers like one regretful, confounded:
And night lowered on her morn, and a branch supported them both, and she bit into crystal with pearls.

Then did the company set high his value, and deem that his steady rain was a plenteous one;—And they made pleasant their converse with him, and gave him goodly clothing.—Said the teller of this story: Now when I saw the blazing of his firebrand, and the gleam of his unveiled brightness, I fixed a long look to guess at him, and made my eye to stray over his countenance.—And lo! he was our Shaykh of Serûj; but now his

dark night was moon-lit.—Then I congratulated myself on his coming thither, and hastened to kiss his hand :— And said to him, "What has changed thy appearance, so that I could not recognise thee? what has made thy beard gray, so that I knew not thy countenance?"— And he indited and said :—

The stroke of calamities makes us hoary, and fortune to men is a changer.

If it yields to-day to any, to-morrow it overcomes him.

Trust not the gleam of its lightning, for it is a deceitful gleam.

But be patient if it hounds calamities against thee, and drives them on.

For there is no disgrace on the pure gold when it is turned about in the fire.

Then he rose and departed from his place, and carried away our hearts with him.

THE THIRD ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF ḲAYLAH."

Ḥârith is in a circle of scholars, when a lame man makes his appearance, and after saluting them describes his former affluence and present penury in a very poetical and figurative style. Ḥârith perceiving his genius, and pitying his distress, offers him a *denar*, on condition that he will improvise some lines in praise of it. This the lame man at once does, and on Ḥârith offering him another *denar* on condition of his blaming it, he recites another composition in dispraise of money. Ḥârith then recognizes in the lame man Abû Zayd, and rebukes him for his imposture. Abû Zayd defends himself in some new verses. The opening address of Abû Zayd is in imitation of a style said to be common among the Arabs of the desert.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I was set with some comrades in a company wherein he that made appeal was never bootless, and the rubbing of the fire-shafts never failed, and the flame of contention never

blazed.—And while we were catching from each other the cues of recitations, and betaking ourselves to novelties of anecdote,—Behold there stood by us one on whom was a worn garment, and in whose walk was a limp.—And he said, O ye best of treasures, joys of your kindred: Health to you this morning; may ye enjoy your morning draught.—Look on one who was erewhile master of guest-room and largess, wealth and bounty, land and villages, dishes and feasting.—But the frowning of calamities ceased not from him, and the warrings of sorrows, and the fire-flakes of the malice of the envious, and the succession of dark befallings,—Until the court was empty, and the yard was bare, and the fountain sank, and the dwelling was desolate, and the hall was void, and the chamber stone-strewed.—And fortune shifted so that the household wailed; and the stalls were vacant, so that the rival had compassion; and the cattle and the goods they perished, so that the envious and malignant pitied.—And to such a pass did we come, through assailing fortune and prostrating need,—That we were shod with soreness, and fed on choking, and filled our bellies with ache, and wrapped our entrails upon hunger, and anointed our eyes with watching, and made pits our home, and deemed thorns a smooth bed, and came to forget our saddles, and thought destroying death to be sweet, and the ordained day to be tardy.—And now is there any one generous to heal, bountiful to bestow?—For by Him who made me to spring from Ḳaylah, surely I am now a brother of penury, I have not a nights' victual.

Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Now I pitied his distresses, and inclined to the eliciting of his rhymes.—

So I drew forth for him a denar, and said to him, to prove him, "If thou praise it in verse it is thine, full surely."—And he betook himself to recite on the spot, borrowing nothing:—

How noble is that yellow one, whose yellowness is pure,
Which traverses the regions, and whose journeying is afar.
Told abroad are its fame and repute:
Its lines are set as the secret sign of wealth;
Its march is coupled with the success of endeavours;
Its bright look is loved by mankind;
As though its ore had been molten of their hearts.
By its aid whoever has gotten it in his purse assails boldly,
Though kindred be perished, or tardy to help.
Oh charming are its purity and brightness;
Charming are its sufficiency and help.
How many a ruler is there whose rule has been perfected by it!
How many a sumptuous one is there whose grief, but for it, would be endless!
How many a host of cares has one charge of it put to flight!
How many a full moon has a sum of it brought down!
How many a one burning with rage, whose coal is flaming,
Has it been secretly whispered to, and then his anger has softened.
How many a prisoner, whom his kin had yielded,
Has it delivered, so that his gladness has been unmingled,
Now by the Truth of the Lord whose creation brought it forth,
Were it not for His fear, I should say its power is supreme.

Then he stretched forth his hand after his recitation, and said, "The honourable man performs what he promises, and the rain-cloud pours if it has thundered."—So I threw him the denar, and said, "Take it; no grudging goes with it."—And he put it in his mouth and said, "God bless it."—Then he girt up his skirts for departure, after that he had paid his thanks.—But there arose in me, through his pleasantry, a giddiness of desire which made me ready to incur indebtedness.—So I bared another denar, and said, "Does it suit thee to

blame this, and then gather it?"—And he recited impromptu, and sang with speed:—

Ruin on it for a deceiver and insincere,
The yellow one with two faces like a hypocrite!
It shows forth with two qualities to the eye of him that looks on it,
The adornment of the loved one, the colour of the lover.
Affection for it, think they who judge truly,
Tempts men to commit that which shall anger their Maker.
But for it no thief's right hand were cut off;
Nor would tyranny be displayed by the impious;
Nor would the niggard shrink from the night-farer;
Nor would the delayed claimant mourn the delay of him that withholds;
Nor would men call to God from the envious who casts at them.
Moreover, the worst quality that it possesses
Is that it helps thee not in straits,
Save by fleeing from thee like a runaway slave.
Well done he who casts it away from a hill-top,
And who, when it whispers to him with the whispering of a lover,
Says to it in the words of the truth-speaking, the veracious,
"I have no mind for intimacy with thee,—begone!"

Then said I to him, "How abundant is thy shower!" He said, "Agreement binds strongest."—So I tossed him the second denar and said, "Consecrate them both with the Twice-read Chapter."—He cast it into his mouth and joined it with its twin,—And turned away blessing his morning's walk, praising the assembly and its bounty.—Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Now my heart whispered me that he was Abû Zayd, and that his going lame was for a trick;—So I called him back and said to him, "Thou art recognised by thy eloquence, so straighten thy walk."—He said, "If thou be the son of Hammâm, be thou greeted with honour and live long among the honourable."—I said, "I am Ḥârith; but what is thy condition amid all thy fortunes."—He said, "I change between two conditions, distress and ease; and I veer

with two winds, the tempest and the breeze."—I said, "And how hast thou pretended lameness? the like of thee plays not buffoon."—Then his cheerfulness, which had shone forth, waned; but he recited as he moved away:—

I have feigned to be lame, not from love of lameness, but that I may knock at the gate of relief.

For my cord is thrown on my neck, and I go as one who ranges freely.

Now if men blame me I say, "Excuse me: sure there is no guilt on the lame."

THE FOURTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF DAMIETTA."

Ḥârith is journeying in a caravan to Damietta, and during one of the night-halts he hears two men conversing on duty towards a neighbour. The younger being asked for his opinion replies in a spirit of charity and generosity, upon which the other rebukes him, and sets forth the fitting conduct of a man to his neighbour in accordance with the teachings of selfishness and worldly wisdom. These addresses, especially that of the elder man, are expressed in a highly rhetorical diction, which captivates the literary Ḥârith, and the next morning he looks for them, and discovers them to be Abû Zayd and his son. He invites them to his own quarters, introduces them to his friends, and procures for them valuable presents. Abû Zayd then asks permission to go to a neighbouring village and take a bath, promising to return speedily. They consent, and he goes off with his son. After waiting the greater part of the day they find that he has deceived them, and prepare to continue their journey; Ḥârith, when making ready his camel, finds some lines written on the saddle, which allude to a precept in the Koran in favour of separating after a meal. The plays on words in this Assembly are exceedingly ingenious and elaborate, and the opening description has much poetical beauty.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I journeyed to Damietta in a year of much coming and going,—And in

those days was I glanced after for my affluence, desired in friendship:—I trained the bordered robes of wealth and looked upon the features of joy.—And I was travelling with companions who had broken the staff of dissension, who were suckled on the milk-flows of concord,—So that they showed like the teeth of a comb in uniformity, and like one soul in agreement of desires;—But we coursed on withal apace, and not one of us but had saddled a fleet she-camel;—And if we alighted at a station or went aside to a spring, we snatched the halt and lengthened not the staying.

Now it happened that we were urging our camels on a night youthful in prime, raven-locked of complexion;—And we journeyed until the night-season had put off its prime, and the morning had wiped away the dye of the dark;—But when we wearied of the march and inclined to drowsiness, we came upon a ground with dew-moistened hillocks, and a faint east breeze:—And we chose it as a resting-place for the white camels, an abode for the night-halt.—Now when the caravan had descended there, and the groan and the roar of the beasts were still,—I heard a loud-voiced man say to his talk-fellow in the camp, "What is the rule of thy conduct with thy people and neighbours?"—The other answered, I am duteous to my neighbour though he wrong me; and give my fellowship even to the violent; and bear with a partner though he disorder my affairs; and love my friend even though he drench me with a tepid draught; and prefer my well-wisher above my brother; and fulfil to my comrade even though he requite me not with a tenth; and think little of much if it be for my guest; and whelm my companion with my kindness;

and put my talk-fellow in the place of my prince; and hold my intimate to be as my chief; and commit my gifts to my acquaintance; and confer my comforts on my associate; and soften my speech to him that hates me; and continue to ask after him that disregards me; and am pleased with but the crumbs of my due; and am content with but the least portion of my reward; and complain not of wrong even when I am wronged; and revenge not, even though a viper sting me.

Then said his companion to him, Alas! my boy, only he who clings should be clung to; only he who is valuable should be prized.—As for me I give only to him who will requite; I distinguish not the insolent by my regard; nor will I be of pure affection to one who refuses me fair-dealing; nor treat as a brother one who would undo my tethering rope; nor aid one who would baulk my hopes; nor care for one who would cut my cords; nor be courteous to him who ignores my value; nor give my leading rope to one who breaks my covenant; nor be free of my love to my adversaries; nor lay aside my menace to the hostile; nor plant my benefits on the land of my enemies; nor be willing to impart to him who rejoices at my ills; nor show my regard to him who will exult at my death; nor favour with my gifts any but my friends; nor call to the curing of my sickness any but those who love me; nor confer my friendship on him who will not stop my breach; nor make my purpose sincere to him who wishes my decease; nor be earnest in prayer for him who will not fill my wallet; nor pour out my praise on him who empties my jar.—For who has adjudged that I should be lavish and thou shouldest hoard, that I should be soft and thou rough, that

I should melt and thou freeze, that I should blaze and thou smoulder?—No, by Allah, but let us balance in speech as coin, and match in deed as sandals.—That each to each we may be safe from fraud and free from hatred.—For else, why should I give thee full water and thou stint me? why should I bear with thee and thou contemn me? why should I gain for thee and thou wound me? why should I advance to thee and thou repel me? For how should fair-dealing be attracted by injury? how can the sun rise clear with cloud?—And when did love follow docilely after wrong? and what man of honour consents to a state of abasement?—For excellently said thy father:—

Whoso attaches his affection to me, I repay him as one who builds on his foundation:

And I mete to a friend as he metes to me, according to the fullness of his meting or its defect.

I make him not a loser! for the worst of men is he whose to-day falls short of his yesterday.

Whoever seeks fruit of me gets only the fruit of his own planting.

I seek not to defraud, but I will not come off with the bargain of one who is weak in his reason.

I hold not truth binding on me towards a man who holds it not binding on himself.

There may be some one insincere in love who fancies that I am true in my friendship for him, while he is false;

And knows not in his ignorance that I pay my creditor his debt after its kind.

Sunder, with the sundering of hate, from one who would make thee a fool, and hold him as one entombed in his grave.

And towards him in whose intercourse there is aught doubtful put on the garb of one who shrinks from his intimacy.

And hope not for affection from any who sees that thou art in want of his money.

Said Al Ḥarith, son of Hammâm: Now, when I had gathered what passed between them, I longed to know them in person.—And when the sun shone forth, and

robed the sky with light, I went forth before the camels had risen, and with an earliness beyond the earliness of the crow,—And began to follow the direction of that night-voice, and to examine the faces with a searching glance:—Until I caught sight of Abû Zayd and his son talking together, and upon them were two worn mantles.—Then I knew that they were my two talkers of the night, the authors of my recitation.—So I approached them as one enamoured of their refinement, pitying their shabbiness;—And offered them a removal to my lodging, and the disposal of my much and my little;—And began to tell abroad their worth among the travellers, and to shake for them the fruited branches;—Until they were whelmed with gifts, and taken as friends.—Now we were in a night-camp, whence we could discern the build of the villages, and spy the fires of hospitality.—And when Abû Zayd saw that his purse was full, and his distress removed, he said to me, "Truly my body is dirty, and my filth has caked:—Wilt thou permit me to go to a village, and bathe, and fulfil this urgent need?"—I said, "If thou wilt; but quick! return!"—He said, "Thou shalt find me appear again to thee, quicker than the glancing of thine eye."—Then he coursed away, as courses the good steed in the training-ground, and said to his son, "Haste! haste!"—And we imagined not that he was deceiving, or seeking to escape.—So we stayed and watched for him as men watch for the new moons of feasts, and made search for him by spies and scouts.—Until the sunlight was weak with age, and the wasted bank of the day had nigh crumbled in.—Then, when the term of waiting had been prolonged, and the sun showed in faded garb—

I said to my companions, "We have gone to the extreme in delay, and have been long in the setting forth;—So that we have lost time, and it is plain that the man was lying.—Now, therefore, prepare for the journey, and turn not aside to the greenness of dung heaps."—Then I rose to equip my camel and lade for the departure; and found that Abû Zayd had written on the pack saddle:—

Oh thou, who wast to me an arm and a helper, above all mankind!

Reckon not that I have left thee through impatience or ingratitude:

For since I was born I have been of those who "when they have eaten separate.

Said Al Ḥarith: "Then I made the company read the words of the Koran that were on the pack saddle, so that he who had blamed him might excuse him.—And they admired his witticism, but commended themselves from his mischief.—Then we set forth, nor could we learn whose company he had gotten in our place.

THE FIFTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF KUFA."

The following Assembly, remarkable for the poetical beauty of its language, and the delicacy of its versification, describes an adventure in which Abû Zayd obtains a sum of money from a company of generous scholars. Ḥârith is engaged with some friends in a night conversation at Kufa, one of the chief seats of Arabian learning, when a stranger knocks at the door, and addresses the inmates in verses describing his want and weariness, his excellent disposition, and his gratitude for the favours he may receive. Struck with his poetical powers the company admit him, and give him a supper. The lamp being brought, Ḥârith discovers that the guest is Abû Zayd, and informs the company of his merits. They then ask him for a story, and he relates that he had that evening met with a long

lost son, whom he would be glad to take charge of, did not his poverty hinder him. As he had taken care to mention in the narrative that he was of the royal race of Ghassân, the company are moved by his misfortunes, and at once raise a large sum of money to enable him to support his boy. Abû Zayd delights them with his conversation, but as soon as daylight appears he calls away Ḥârith, to assist him in cashing the cheques or orders which he had received. The simple Ḥârith, who had been delighted with the verses which the father had put into the mouth of his son, desires to see so eloquent a youth; upon which Abû Zayd laughs heartily, tells his friend, in some exquisite verses, that such a desire is the following of a mirage, that he, Abû Zayd, had neither wife nor son, and that the story was only a trick to obtain money. He then departs, leaving Ḥârith mortified at the adventure.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I was conversing at Kufa, in a night whose complexion was of a two-fold hue, whose moon was as an amulet of silver—With companions who had been nourished on the milk of eloquence, who might draw the train of oblivion over Saḥbân.—Each was a man to remember from, and not to guard against; each was one whom his friend would incline to, and not avoid.—And the night talk fascinated us until the moon had set, and the watching overcame us.—Now when night's unmingled dark had spread its awning, and there was nought but nodding among us—We heard from the gate the faint sound of a wayfarer, rousing the dogs; then followed the knock of one bidding to open.—We said, "Who is it that comes in the dark night?" Then the traveller answered:—

O people of the mansion, be ye guarded from ill!
Meet not harm as long as ye live!
Lo! the night which glooms has driven
To your abode one dishevelled, dust laden,
A brother of journeying, that has been lengthened, extended,
Till he has become bent and yellow
Like the new moon of the horizon when it smiles.

And now he approaches your court-yard, begging boldly,
And repairs to you before all people else,
To seek from you food and a lodging.
Ye have in him a guest contented, ingenuous,
One pleased with all, whether sweet or bitter,
One who will withdraw from you, publishing your bounty.

Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Now when we were caught by the sweetness of his utterance, and knew what was behind his lightning,—We hastened to open the gate, and met him with welcome;—And said to the boy "Quick, quick! bring what is ready!"—Then said our guest, "Now, by Him who has set me down at your abode, I will not roll my tongue over your food,—Unless ye pledge me that ye will not make me a burden, that ye will not, for my sake, task yourselves with a meal.—For sometimes a morsel aches the eater, and forbids him his repasts.—And the worst of guests is he who imposes trouble and annoys his host,—And especially with a harm that affects the body and tends to sickness.—For, by that proverb, which is widely current, 'The best suppers are those that are clearly seen.'—Is only meant that supper-time should be hastened, and eating by night, which dims the sight, avoided.—Unless, by Allah, the fire of hunger kindle and stand in the way of sleep."—Said Al Ḥârith: Now it was as though he had got sight of our desire, and so had shot with the bow of our conviction.—Accordingly we gratified him by agreeing to the condition, and commended him for his easy temper.—And when the boy brought what was to be had, and lighted the candle in the midst of us, I looked close at him, and lo! it was Abû Zayd.—So I said to my company, "Joy to you of the guest who has come! Nay, but the spoil is lightly won!—For if the moon of Sirius

has gone down, truly the moon of poetry has risen:—Or if the full moon of the Lion has waned, the full moon of eloquence shines forth."—Then ran through them the wine-glow of joy, and sleep flew away from their eye-corners.—And they refused the rest which they had purposed, and returned to the spreading out of pleasantry, after they had folded it.—But Abû Zayd kept intent upon plying his hands; however, when what was before him might be removed—I said to him, "Present us with one of the rare stories from thy night talkings, or some wonder from among the wonders of thy journeys."—He said, "Of wonders I have met with such as no seers have seen, no tellers have told.—But among the most wondrous was that which I beheld to-night, a little before my visit to you and my coming to your gate."—Then we bade him tell us of this new thing which he had seen in the field of his night-faring.—He said, Truly the hurlings of exile have thrown me to this land:—And I was in hunger and distress, with a scrip like the heart of the mother of Moses.—Now, as soon as the dark had settled, I arose, in spite of all my footsoreness, to seek a host or to 'gain a loaf.—Then the driver hunger, and Fate, which is bye-named the Father of Wonders, urged me on, till I stood at the door of a house, and spoke, improvising:—

Hail people of this dwelling,
May ye live in the ease of a plenteous life!
What have ye for a son of the road, one crushed to the sand,
Worn with journeys, stumbling in the night-dark night,
Aching in entrails, which inclose nought but hunger?
For two days he has not tasted the savour of a meal:
In your land there is no refuge for him.
And already the van of the drooping darkness has gloomed;
And through bewilderment he is in restlessness.

Now in this abode is there any one, sweet of spring,
Who will say to me, "Throw away thy staff and enter:
Rejoice in a cheerful welcome and a ready meal?"

Then came forth to me a lad in a tunic, and answered:—

Now by the sanctity of the Shaykh who ordained hospitality,
And founded the House of Pilgrimage in the Mother of cities,
We have nought for the night-farer when he visits us
But conversation and a lodging in our hall.
For how should he entertain whom hinders from sleepfulness
Hunger which peels his bones when it assails him?
Now what thinkest thou of my tale? what thinkest thou?

I said, "What shall I do with an empty house, and a host the ally of penury?—But tell me, youth, what is thy name, for thy understanding has charmed me."—He said, "My name is Zayd, and my birth-place Fayd: and I came to this city yesterday with my mother's kindred of the Benû 'Abs."—I said to him, "Show me further, so mayest thou live and be raised when thou fallest!"—He said, "My mother Barrah told me (and she is like her name, 'pious') that she married in the year of the foray on Mâwân a man of the nobles of Serûj and Ghassân;—But when he was aware of her pregnancy (for he was a crafty bird, it is said) he made off from her by stealth, and away he has stayed,—Nor is it known whether he is alive and to be looked for, or whether he has been laid in the lonely tomb."—Said Abû Zayd, "Now I knew by sure signs that he was my child; but the emptiness of my hand turned me from making known to him,—So I parted from him with heart crushed and tears unsealed.—And now, ye men of understanding, have ye heard aught more wondrous than this wonder?"—We said, "No, by Him who has knowledge of the Book."—He said, "Record it among the

wonders of chance; bid it abide for ever in the hearts of scrolls; for nothing like it has been told abroad in the world."—Then we bade bring the ink-flask, and its snake-like reeds, and we wrote the story elegantly as he worded it;—After which we sought to draw from him his wish about receiving his boy.—He said, "If my purse were heavy, then to take charge of my son would be light."—We said, "If a *niṣâb* of money would suffice thee, we will collect it for thee at once."—He said, "And how should a *niṣâb* not content me? would any but a madman despise such a sum?"—Said the narrator, Then each of us undertook a share of it, and wrote for him an order for it.—Whereupon he gave thanks for the kindness, and exhausted the plenteousness of praise; until we thought his speech long, or our merit little.—And then he spread out such a bright mantle of talk as might shame the stuffs of Yemen,—Until the dawn appeared and the light-bearing morn went forth.—So we spent a night of which the mixed hues had departed, until its hind-locks grew gray in the dawn;—And whose lucky stars were sovereign until its branch budded into light.—But when the limb of the sun peeped forth, he leaped up as leaps the gazelle,—And said, "Rise up, that we may take hold on the gifts and draw payment of the cheques:—For the clefts of my heart are widening through yearning after my child."—So I went with him, hand in hand, to make easy his success.—But as soon as he had secured the coin in his purse the marks of his joy flashed forth,—And he said, "Be thou rewarded for the steps of thy feet! be God my substitute towards thee!"—I said, "I wish to follow thee that I may behold thy noble child, and speak with him that he

may answer eloquently."—Then looked he at me as looks the deceiver on the deceived, and laughed till his eye-balls gushed with tears; and he recited:—

O thou who didst fancy the mirage to be water when I quoted to thee what I quoted!

I thought not that my guile would be hidden, or that it would be doubtful what I meant.

By Allah, I have no Barrah for a spouse; I have no son from whom to take a bye-name.

Nothing is mine but divers kinds of magic, in which I am original and copy no one:

They are such as Al Aṣma'î tells not of in what he has told; such as Al Komayt never wove.

These I use when I will to reach whatever my hand would pluck:

And were I to abandon them, changed would be my state, nor should I gain what I now gain.

So allow my excuse; nay, pardon me, if I have done wrong or crime.

Then he took leave of me and passed away, and set coals of the *ghaḍa* in my breast.

THE SIXTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF MERÂGHAH," OR "THE DIVERSIFIED."

This Assembly is the first of a remarkable series of compositions which, though they may be set down by Europeans as merely examples of laborious trifling, are highly esteemed by the Orientals as works of ingenuity and scholarship, and have found in every succeeding age numerous imitators. The incident is that Ḥârith, being once on a visit to Merâghah, in Azerbijan, the north-west province of the present Persian monarchy, found a number of literary men lamenting the decline of learning, and depreciating all contemporary authors in comparison with their predecessors. Sitting in a humble place in the outskirts of the company was an elderly man, who showed by his glances and scornful gestures that he did not value highly the opinions of these critics. When they paused in their fault-finding he took up the conversation, and declared that one person, at least, of the present age was capable of rivalling

any who had gone before in scholarship and the arts of composition. He is asked who is this genius, and answers that it is himself. The company are sceptical, but as the stranger persists in asserting his great ability, they determine to test him, and one of them proposes to him a most difficult task. He tells the company that he is a professional writer attached to the Governor, who though a man of generosity, had declared that he would help him no further, till he had composed an address in which the alternate words should consist entirely of pointed and unpointed letters; that is, that the first, third, fifth words, and so forth, should consist of letters without a point, while the second, fourth, sixth, and so forth, should have only pointed letters. He adds that he had been striving a whole year to produce such a composition, or to find some one who could produce it. The stranger, on hearing this, accepts the task with alacrity, and instantly dictates an address in praise of the Governor, fulfilling the conditions that had been imposed. The company are delighted, and inquire his family and abode: he answers in some plaintive verses that he is of the tribe of Ghassân, and the city of Serûj. His fame having reached the Governor, he is offered the place of a public writer, but declines it. Ḥârith, who had discovered that he was Abû Zayd, asks him the reason of this unwillingness to accept office. Abû Zayd again replies in verse, and tells his friend that a life of freedom and poverty is better than dependence on the great.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I was present in the Court of Supervision at Merâghah when the talk ran of eloquence.—Then agreed all who were there of the knights of the pen, and the lords of genius;—That there remained no one who could select his diction, or use himself freely in it as he willed:—And that since the men of old were gone, there was none now left who could originate a brilliant method, or open a virgin style.—And that even one marvellous among the writers of this age, and holding in his grasp the cords of eloquence, is but a dependent on the ancients, even though he possess the fluency of Saḥbân Wâ'il.—Now there was in the assembly an elderly man, sitting on the outskirts, in

the places of the attendants:—And as often as the company overran in their career, and scattered fruit, good and bad, from their store,—The side-glance of his eye and the up-turning of his nose showed that he was one silent to spring, one crouching who would extend his stride:—That he was a twanger of the bow who shapes his arrows, one who sits in wait desiring the conflict.—But when the quivers were empty, and quiet returned; when the storms had fallen, and the disputer was stayed,—He turned to the company and said, Ye have uttered a grievous thing, ye have wandered much from the way:—For ye have magnified mouldering bones, ye have been excessive in your leaning to those who are gone; ye have contemned your generation, among whom ye were born, and with whom your friendships are established.—Have ye forgotten, ye skilful in testing, ye sages of loosing and binding,—How much new springs have given forth; how the colt has surpassed the full-grown steed;—In refined expressions, and delightful metaphors, and ornate addresses, and admired cadences?—And, if any one here will look diligently, is there in the ancients aught but ideas whose paths are worn, whose ranges are restricted; which have been handed down from them through the priority of their birth, not from any superiority in him who draws first at the well over him who comes after?—Now truly know I one who when he composes colours richly; and when he expresses, embellishes; and when he is lengthy, finds golden thoughts; and when he is brief, baffles his imitator; and when he improvises, astonishes; and when he creates, cuts the envious.

Then said to him the President of the Court, the Eye

of those Eyes: "Who is it that strikes on this rock, that is the hero of these qualities?"—He said, "It is the adversary of this thy skirmish, the partner of thy disputation: Now, if thou wilt, rein a good steed, call forth one who will answer, so shalt thou see a wonder."—He said to him, "Stranger, the chough in our land is not taken for an eagle, and with us it is easy to discern between silver and shingle.—Rare is he who exposes himself to the conflict, and then escapes the mortal hurt; or who stirs up the dust of trial, and then catches not the mote of contempt.—So offer not thy honour to shame, turn not from the counsel of the counsellor."—He answered, "Each man knows best the mark of his arrow, and be sure the night shall disclose its morn."—

Then whispered the company as to how his well should be fathomed, and his proving undertaken.—Said one of them, "Leave him to my share, that I may pelt him with the stone of my story; for it is the tightest of knots, the touch-stone of testing."—Then they invested him with the command in this business as the Rebels invested Abû Na'âmeh.—Whereupon he turned to the elder and said, Know that I am attached to this Governor and maintain my condition by ornamental eloquence.—Now, in my country, I could rely for the straightening of my crookedness on the sufficiency of my means, coupled with the smallness of my family.—But when my back was weighted, and my thin rain failed, I repaired to him from my home with hope, and besought him to restore my comeliness and my competence.—And he looked pleasantly on my coming, and was gracious, and served me morn and even.—But when I sought permission from him to depart to my abode, on the shoulder

of cheerfulness,—He said, "I have determined that I will not provide thee with supplies, I will bring together for thee no scattered means;—Unless, before thy departure, thou compose an address, setting in it an exposition of thy state;—Such, that the letters of one of every two words shall all have dots, while the letters of the other shall not be pointed at all."—And now have I waited for my eloquence a twelvemonth, but it has returned me not a word; and I have roused my wit for a year, but only my sluggishness has increased.—And I have sought aid among the gathering of the scribes, but each of them has frowned and drawn back.—Now, if thou hast disclosed thy character with accuracy, *Come with a sign if thou be of the truthful.*

Then answered the elder, "Thou hast put a good steed to the pace; thou hast sought water at a full stream; thou hast given the bow to him who fashioned it; thou hast lodged in the house him who built it."—And he thought a while till he had let his flow of wit collect, his milch camel fill her udder:—And then he said: Wool thy ink-flask, and take thy implements and write:—

Generosity (may God establish the host of thy successes), adorns; but meanness (may fortune cast down the eye-lid of thy enviers), dishonours; the noble rewards, but the base disappoints; the princely entertains, but the niggard frights away; the liberal nourishes, but the churl pains; giving relieves, but deferring torments; blessing protects, and praise purifies; the honourable repays, for repudiation abases; the rejection of him who should be respected is error; a denial to the sons of hope is outrage; and none is miserly but the fool, and none is

foolish but the miser; and none hoards but the wretched; for the pious clenches not his palms.

But thy promise ceases not to fulfil; thy sentiments cease not to relieve; nor thy clemency to indulge; nor thy new moon to illumine; nor thy bounty to enrich; nor thy enemies to praise thee; nor thy blade to destroy; nor thy princeship to build up; nor thy suitor to gain; nor thy praiser to win; nor thy kindness to succour; nor thy heaven to rain; nor thy milk-flow to abound; nor thy refusal to be rare.—Now he who hopes in thee is an old man like a shadow, one to whom nothing remains.—He seeks thee with a persuasion whose eagerness leaps onward; he praises thee in choice phrases, which merit their dowries.—His demand is a light one, his claims are clear; his praise is striven for, his blame is shunned.—And behind him is a household whom misery has touched, whom wrong has stripped, whom squalor involves.—And he is ever in tears that come at call, and trouble that melts him, and care that is as a guest, and growing sadness:—On account of hope that has disappointed him, and loss that has made him hoary, and the enemy that has fixed tooth in him, and the quiet that is gone.—And yet his love has not swerved, that there should be anger at him; nor is his wood rotten, that he should be lopped away; nor has his breast spit foulness that he should be shaken off; nor has his intercourse been froward that he should be hated.—Now thy honour admits not the rejection of his claim, so whiten his hope by the lightening of his distress: then will he publish thy praise throughout the world.—So mayest thou live to avert misfortune, and to bestow wealth; to heal grief and to care for the aged:—Attended by affluence and

fresh joyousness; as long as the hall of the rich is visited, or the delusion of the selfish is feared. And so Peace.

Now when he had ceased from the dictation of his address, and showed forth his prowess in the strife of eloquence—The company gratified him both by word and deed, and made large to him their courtesy and their bounty.—Then was he asked from what tribe was his origin, and in what valley was his lair; and he answered:

Ghassân is my noble kindred, and Serûj my ancient land:
There my home was like the sun in splendour and mighty rank;
And my dwelling was as Paradise in sweetness and pleasantness and worth.
Oh, excellent were the life I led there and the plenteous delights,
In the day that I drew my broidered robe in its meadow, sharp of purpose.
I walked proudly in the mantle of youth and looked upon goodly pleasures;
Fearing not the visitations of time and its evil haps.
Now if grief could kill, surely I should perish from my abiding griefs;
Or if past life could be redeemed my good heart's blood should redeem it.
For death is better for a man than to live the life of a beast,
When the ring of subjection leads him to mighty trouble and outrage,
And he sees lions whom the paws of assailing hyænas seize.
But the fault is in the time: but for its ill luck character would not miss its place:
If the time were upright, then would the conditions of men be upright in it.

After this his story reached the Governor, who filled his mouth with pearls,—And bade him join himself to his followers, and preside over his court of public writing.—But the gifts sufficed him, and unwillingness restrained him from office.—Said the narrator: Now I had recognized the wood of his tree before the ripening of his fruit:

—And I had nigh roused the people to the loftiness of his worth before that his full moon shone forth.—But he hinted to me by a twinkle of his eyelid that I should not bare his sword from its sheath.—And when he was going forth, full of purse, and parting from us, having gotten victory,—I escorted him, performing the duty of respect, and chiding him for his refusal of office.—But he turned away with a smile and recited with a chant:

Sure to traverse the lands in poverty is dearer to me than rank:
For in rulers there is caprice and fault-finding, Oh what fault-finding!
There is none of them who completes his good work, or who builds up where has laid foundation.
So let not the glare of the mirage beguile thee; undertake not that which is doubtful:
For how many a dreamer has his dream made joyful; but fear has come upon him when he waked.

THE SEVENTH ASSEMBLY CALLED "OF BARḲA'ÎD."

This Assembly is well known to students, having been published with a translation and valuable notes by De Sacy in his *Chrestomathie Arabe*. Ḥârith is at Barḳa'îd, a place which is described as the chief town of the Diyâr Rabî'ah, at the distance of seventeen parasangs from Mowṣil. The feast at the end of Ramaḍân is approaching, and being desirous of joining in this solemnity he goes to the public prayer in his best attire. When the congregation has formed itself into rows, after the manner of Moslem worship, he espies an old man with his eyes closed accompanied by an old woman. The man takes out of a bag a number of papers curiously written or illuminated in variously coloured inks; and the old woman, going through the rows, presents them to those whom she guesses from their appearance to be charitably disposed. One of them falls to the lot of Ḥârith, who finds on it some strange verses full of alliterations and plays on words. He keeps it, and when the old woman, being disappointed in her appeal, returns to reclaim it, he offers her a dirhem on the condition that

she will tell him the name of the author. She informs him that the old man had composed the verses, and that he was a native of Serûj. Ḥârith then guesses that he must be Abû Zayd, and is much concerned to find that he has become blind. When the prayer is over he goes up to him and discovers that he is indeed Abû Zayd, whereupon he presents him with a garment and invites him to his house. No sooner are they in private than Abû Zayd opens his eyes, which are perfectly sound, and Ḥârith discovers that his pretended blindness was a trick to excite pity. Abû Zayd makes a good meal, and after he has had enough sends Ḥârith to the closet to fetch alkali to wash his hands after eating, and a toothpick. When the host returns the old man and his companion are gone; Abû Zayd having as usual made his escape, to avoid a lecture on his hypocrisy and the solicitation of his friend that he would abandon his vagrant life.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I had determined on journeying from Barḳa'îd; but now I noted the signs of the coming feast,—And I disliked to set forth from the city until I had witnessed there the day of adornment.—So when it came on with its rites, bounden or of free will, and brought up its horsemen and footmen,—I followed the tradition in new apparel, and went forth with the people to keep festival.—Now when the congregation of the prayer court was gathered and ranged, and the crowding took men's breath,—There appeared an old man in a pair of cloaks, and his eyes were closed:—And he bore on his arm what was like a horse-bag, and had for a guide an old woman like a goblin.—Then he stopped, as stops one tottering to sink, and greeted with the greeting of him whose voice is feeble.—And when he had made an end of his salutation he circled his five fingers in his wallet,—And brought forth scraps of paper that had been written on with colours of dyes in the season of leisure,—And gave them to his old beldame, bidding her to detect each simple one.—So whenever she perceived of any that his hand was moist in bounty, she cast one of the papers before him.

—Said Al Ḥârith: Now cursed fate allotted to me a scrap whereon was written:—

Sure I have become crushed with pains and fears;
Tried by the proud one, the crafty, the assailer,
By the traitor among my brethren, who hates me for my need,
By jading from those who work to undo my toils.
How oft do I burn through spites and penury and wandering;
How oft do I tramp in shabby garb, thought of by none.
Oh, would that fortune when it wronged me had slain my babes!
For were not my cubs torments to me and ills,
I would not have addressed my hopes to kin or lord:
Nor would I draw my skirts along the track of abasement.
For my garret would be more seemly for me, and my rags more honourable.
Now is there a generous man who will see that the lightening of my loads must be by a denar;
Or will quench the heat of my anxiety by a shirt and trousers.

Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Now when I had looked on the garb of the verses, I longed for a knowledge of him who wove it, the broiderer of its pattern.—And my thought whispered to me that the way to him was through the old woman, and advised me that a fee to an informer is lawful.—So I watched her, and she was wending through the rows, row by row, begging a dole of the hands, hand by hand.—But not at all did the trouble prosper her; no purse shed aught upon her palm.—Wherefore when her soliciting was baffled, and her circuit wearied her,—She commended herself to God with the "Return," and addressed herself to collect the scraps of paper.—But the Devil made her forget the scrap that I held, and she turned not aside to my spot:—But went back to the old man weeping at the denial, complaining of the oppression of the time.—And he said, "In God's hands I am, to God I commit my case; there is no strength or power but by God," then he recited:—

There remains not any pure, not any sincere; not a spring, not a helper:

But of basenesses there is one level; not any is trusty, not any of worth.

Then said he to her, "Cheer thy soul and promise it good; collect the papers and count them."—She said, "Truly I counted them when I asked them back, and I found that one of them the hand of loss had seized."—He said, "Perdition on thee, Wretch; shall we be hindered, alas, both of the prey and the net, both of the brand and the wick? surely this is a new handful to the load."—Then did the old woman hasten back, retracing her path to seek her scroll; and when she drew near to me I put with the paper a dirhem and a mite:—And said to her, "If thou hast a fondness for the polished, the engraved (and I pointed to the dirhem) shew me the secret, the obscure;—But if thou willest not to explain, take then the mite and begone."—Then she inclined to the getting of that whole full moon, the bright-faced, the large.—So she said, "Quit contention and ask what thou wilt."—Whereupon I asked her of the old man and his country, of the poem, and of him who wove its mantle.—She said, "Truly, the old man is of the people of Serûj, and he it was who broidered that woven poem."—Then she snatched the dirhem with the snatch of a hawk, and shot away as shoots the darting arrow.—But it troubled my heart that perchance it was Abû Zayd who was indicated, and my grief kindled at his mishap with his eyes.—And I should have preferred to have gone suddenly on him and talked to him, that I might test the quality of my discernment upon him.—But I was unable to come to him save by treading on the necks of the congregation, a thing for-

bidden in the law:—And, moreover, I was unwilling that people should be annoyed by me, or that blame should arrive to me.—So I cleaved to my place, but made his form the fetter of my sight, until the sermon was ended, and to leap to him was lawful.—Then I went briskly to him and examined him in spite of the closing of his eyelids.—And, lo! my shrewdness was as the shrewdness of Ibn ʿAbbâs, and my discernment as the discernment of Iyâs.—So at once I made myself known, and presented him with one of my tunics, and bade him to my bread.—And he was joyful at my bounty and recognition, and acceded to the call to my loaves;—And he set forth, and my hand was his leading cord, my shadow his conductor;—And the old woman was the third prop of the pot; yes, by the Watcher from whom no secret is hidden!—Now, when he had taken seat in my nest, and I had set before him what hasty meal was in my power, he said, "Ḥârith, is there with us a third?"—I said, "There is none but the old woman."—He said, "From her no secret is withheld."—Then he opened his eyes and stared round with the twin balls, and, lo! the two lights of his face kindled like the Farḳadân.—And I was joyful at the safety of his sight, but marvelled at the strangeness of his ways.—Nor did quiet possess me, nor did patience fit with me, until I asked him, "What led thee to feign blindness; thou, with thy journeying in desolate places, and thy traversing of wildernesses, and thy pushing into far lands?"—But he made show as if his mouth were full, and kept as though busied with his meal:—Until when he had fulfilled his need, he sharpened his look upon me and recited:

Since Time (and he is the father of mankind) makes himself blind to the right in his purposes and aims,

I too have assumed blindness, so as to be called a brother of it;—what wonder that one should match himself with his father!

Then said he to me, Rise, and go to the closet, and fetch me alkali that may clear the eye, and clean the hand, and soften the skin, and perfume the breath, and brace the gums, and strengthen the stomach:—And let it be clean of box, fragrant of odour, new of pounding, delicate of powdering;—So that one touching it shall count it to be eye paint, and one smelling it shall fancy it to be camphor.—And join with it a toothpick choice in material, delightful in use, goodly in shape, that invites to the repast:—And let it have the slimness of a lover, and the polish of a sword, and the sharpness of the lance of war, and the pliancy of a green bough.—Said Al Ḥârith: Then I rose to do what he bade that I might rid him of the trace of his food:—And thought not that he purposed to deceive by sending me into the closet; nor suspected that he was mocking of his messenger when he called for the alkali and toothpick.—But when I returned with what was asked for, in less than the drawing of a breath, I found that the hall was empty, and that the old man and woman had sped away.—Then was I extreme in anger at his deceit, and I pressed on his track in search of him;—But he was as one who is sunk in the sea, or has been borne aloft to the clouds of heaven.

THE EIGHTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF MA'ARRAH."

This Assembly, like several others that will be met with in the course of the work, is so essentially Arabic as almost to forbid intelligible translation. Two suitors, an old man and a youth, appear before the Kadi of Ma'arrah. The former narrates to the Kadi that he had possessed a beautiful and attractive, yet obedient and active, slave girl; that the youth had borrowed her, treated her roughly, and then returned her in an infirm state. The youth admits the charge, but declares that he had offered sufficient compensation; and then complains that the old man detained as a pledge a male slave of his, who was of good origin and qualities, and highly serviceable to his master. The Kadi perceives from the style of these addresses that the language is enigmatical, and bids the litigants speak plainly. The youth then improvises some verses to explain that by a slave girl the old man meant a needle which the youth had borrowed, and the eye of which he had broken by accident as he was drawing the thread through it; the male slave which the old man detained was a pencil or *stylus* for the application of *koḥl*, the dark pigment with which Orientals anoint the eyelid to heighten by contrast the lustre of the eye. The old man in his turn admits the truth of this, but pleads in mournful verse his poverty and his inability to bear the loss even of a needle. The Kadi, touched with pity, bestows a trifle on both, and they depart joyously. But almost immediately he suspects that he has been deceived, and sends an attendant after them to bring them back. When they are again in the court, the Kadi charges them with deceit. The boy is abashed, but the old man steps forward boldly and confesses that he is the noted impostor of Serûj, and that the boy is his son; that they never had either needle or koḥl pencil, but had devised the story to excite pity. The Kadi, charmed with their literary skill, pardons their offence and dismisses them with a caution. The chief feature in the composition is the enigmatical description of the needle and pencil, which depends on the double meanings of the words and phrases contained in it. Some of these are so subtle that even the native commentators are undecided about them; and we may assume that the *double-entente* of passages like this, and the similar address in the Thirteenth Assembly, was among the lessons which Ḥarîri is said to have taught to his pupils. The commentators, who are often profuse of interpretation where there

is no difficulty, are somewhat brief when they have to deal with these dark compositions. Even the loquacious Sherîshi, who sometimes gives whole pages of anecdote and poetical quotation to illustrate a single word, passes over in silence phrases where there evidently lurks a second and hidden sense. The present translation is, it is hoped, an adequate interpretation of the author's meaning.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: Among the wonders of time, I saw that two suitors came before the Kadi of Ma'arrat an No'mân:—From the one of them the two excellencies of life had departed, while the other was as a bough of the ben tree.—And the old man said: God strengthen the judge, as by him He strengthens whoever seeks judgment.—Behold I had a slave girl, elegant of shape, smooth of cheek, patient to labour;—At one time she ambled like a good steed, at another she slept quietly in her bed: even in July thou wouldst feel her touch to be cool.—She had understanding and discretion, sharpness and wit, a hand with fingers, but a mouth without teeth: yet did she pique as with tongue of snake, and saunter in training robe; and she was displayed in blackness and whiteness; and she drank, but not from cisterns.—She was now truth-telling now beguiling; now hiding, now peeping forth; yet fitted for employment, obedient in poverty and in wealth: if thou didst spurn she showed affection, but if thou didst put her from thee, she remained quietly apart.—Generally would she serve thee, and be courteous to thee, though sometimes she might be froward to thee and pain thee, and trouble thee.[1]—Now this youth asked her service of

[1] The meaning of this passage, when applied to a needle, is as follows:—I had a needle, straight of shape and smooth of side, lasting for work; that sometimes moved quickly in the sewer's hands, and sometimes rested in the needle-box; it was sometimes

me for a purpose of his own, and I made her his servant, without reward;—On the condition that he should enjoy the use of her, but not burden her with more than she could bear.—But he forced on her too hard a work, and exacted of her long labour;—Then returned her to me broken in health, offering a compensation which I accept not.

Then said the youth: Sure the old man is more truthful than the Ḳaṭa: but as for my hurting her it fell out by mistake.—And now have I pledged to him in payment of his damage, a slave[1] of mine, of equal birth

filed in July, it had strength to hold with its rein of thread, it had sharpness and point: it hemmed the garment by the aid of the sewer's fingers; it had a mouth (eye) without teeth; it sometimes pricked with its point, as it was driven through the cloth; it carried a long thread after it; it had sometimes a black and sometimes a white thread; it was bedewed only with the sweat of the sewer's hand; it sewed the cloth or lined it; it now hid itself behind the cloth, and now appeared again; it was adapted for use; it went easily into any orifice, small or large; if thou didst rend anything it joined it, but if thou didst lay it aside in the needle-box, it remained where it was put; mostly did it serve thee and adorn thee by its work, but sometimes it would prick thee, and pain thee and trouble thee.

[1] The meaning of this passage, when applied to a koḥl pencil, is as follows: I had a koḥl pencil, the same at both ends, tracing its origin to the cutler, free from rust and defect; often brought near the apple of the eye; it conferred beauty and produced admiration; it fed the pupil of the eye with ointment, but went not near the tongue; when it was blackened with the ointment it was liberal of it, when it marked the eye it beautified it; when it was supplied with ointment it supplied the eye with it, and when more was required it added more. It remained not always in its case, and seldom anointed except two eyes at a time; it gave plentifully of the koḥl that was on it, and was lifted up to the eye for the purpose; it was constantly attached to the koḥl case, although the two might be of a different material (that is, the pencil might be of gold and the case of glass or silver); though it was used for adorning it was not of a soft substance but of metal.

as regards either kin, tracing his lineage to Al Ḳayn, free from stain and disgrace, whose place was the apple of his master's eye.—He shewed forth kindness, and called up admiration; he nourished mankind, and set guard on his tongue.—If he was placed in power he was generous, if he marked aught for his own he was noble with it; if he was supplied he gave of his supply, and when he was asked for more he added.—He stayed not in the house, and rarely visited his wives, save two by two.—He was generous with his possession, he was lofty in his bounty; he kept with his spouse although she was not of his own clay; and there was pleasure in his comeliness, although he was not desired for his effeminacy.

Then said to them the Kadi, "Now either explain or depart." Then pressed forward the lad, and said:

He lent me a needle to darn my rags, which use has worn and blackened;

And its eye broke in my hand by chance, as I drew the thread through it.

But the old man would not forgive me the paying for it when he saw that it was spoiled;

But said, "Give me a needle like it, or a price, after thou hast mended it."

And he keeps my kohl pencil by him as a pledge: oh, the shame that he has gotten by so doing:

For my eye is dry through giving him this pledge; my hand fails to ransom its anointer.

Now by this statement fathom the depth of my misery and pity one unused to bear it.

Then turned the Kadi to the old man, and said, "Come, speak without glozing," and he said—

I swear by the holy place of sacrifice, and the devout whom the slope of Mina brings together;

If the time had been my helper, thou wouldst not have seen me taking in pledge the pencil which he has pledged to me.

Nor would I bring myself to seek a substitute for a needle that he had spoiled, no nor the price of it.

But the bow of calamities shoots at me with deadly arrows from here and there:

And to know my condition is to know his; misery, and distress, and exile, and sickness.

Fortune has put us on a level: I am his like in misery, and he is as I.

He cannot ransom his pencil now that it lies pledged in my hand:

And, through the narrowness of my own means, it is not within my bounds to forgive him his offending.

Now this is my tale and his: so look upon us, and judge between us, and pity us.

Now when the Kadi had learnt their stories, and was aware of their penury and their distinction,—He took out for them a denar from under his prayer cushion, and said, "With this end and decide your contention."—But the old man caught it before the youth, and claimed the whole of it in earnest, not in jest;—Saying to the youth, "Half is mine as my share of the bounty, and thy share is mine, in payment for my needle:—Nor do I swerve from justice, so come and take thy pencil."—Now there fell on the youth, at the words of the old man, a sadness at which the heart of the Kadi grew sullen, stirring its sorrow for the lost denar.—Yet did he cheer the concern of the youth and his anguish by a few dirhems which he doled to him.—Then he said to the two, "Avoid transactions, and put away disputes, and come not before me with wranglings, for I have no purse of fine-money for you."—And they rose to go out from him, rejoicing at his gift, fluent in his praise.—But as for the Kadi, his ill-humour subsided not after his stone had dripped; his sad look cleared not away after his rock had oozed.—But when he recovered from his fit he turned to his attendants,—And said, "My perception is imbued with the

thought, and my guess announces to me, that these are practisers of craft, not suitors in a claim:—But what is the way to fathom them, and to draw forth their secret?"—Then said to him the Knowing One of his assemblage, the Light of his following:—"Surely the discovery of what they hide must be through themselves."—So he bade an attendant follow them and bring them back; and when they stood before him he said to them, "Tell me truly your camel's age: so shall ye be secure from the consequence of your deceit."—Then did the lad shrink back and ask for pardon; but the old man stepped forward and said:

I am the Serûji and this is my son; and the cub at the proving is like the lion.

Now never has his hand nor mine done wrong in matter of needle or pencil:

But only fortune, the harming, the hostile, has brought us to this, that we came forth to beg

Of each one whose palm is moist, whose spring is sweet; of each whose palm is close, whose hand is fettered;

By every art, and with every aim: by earnest, if it prosper, and if not, by jest.

That we may draw forth a drop for our thirsty lot, and consume our life in wretched victual.

And afterward Death is on the watch for us: if he fall not on us to-day he will fall to-morrow.

Then said the Kadi to him, "Oh rare! how admirable are the breathings of thy mouth; well done! should I say of thee, were it not for the guile that is in thee.—Now know that I am of those that warn thee, and will beware of thee.—So act not again deceitfully with judges, but fear the might of those who bear rule.—For not every minister will excuse, and not at every season will speech be listened to."—Then the old man promised to follow his counsel, and to abstain from disguising his

character.—And he departed from the Kadi's presence, while the guile beamed from his forehead.—Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Now I never saw aught more wonderful than these things in the changes of my journeys, nor read aught like them in the records of books.

THE NINTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF ALEXANDRIA."

This is one of the two Assemblies of Ḥarîri which have been translated and annotated by De Sacy in his Chrestomathy. Ḥârith in his wanderings comes to Alexandria, and, in accordance with his custom, makes the acquaintance of the Kadi, who, as appears in the sequel, is a good-natured and benevolent man. One evening, in winter, the Kadi is distributing the public alms, when an ill-looking old man is brought in by a young and handsome woman who accuses him of having married her on false pretences. She declares that he had deceived her father by giving out that he had an excellent trade as a pearl-merchant; that he had been incautiously accepted, and that now, when it was too late, she had discovered that he had no business at all. Moreover, he had taken all her dress and furniture, piece by piece, and sold it to keep himself in idleness, leaving her and her child to starve. The Kadi is indignant, and threatens to send the husband to prison, unless he can clear himself of the charge. The defendant is in no way disconcerted, but at once improvises some elegant verses, in which he admits his poverty, and that he had sold his wife's effects, but denies that he had deceived her in calling himself a "pearl-stringer," for the pearls which he meant were the pearls of thought, by stringing which into elegant poems he had been accustomed to make a large income from the liberality of the rich and noble. Now, however, times were changed; war and trouble had come upon the earth, and a race of niggards had succeeded the generous patrons of the old days. The Kadi accepts the excuse, bids the woman submit herself to her husband, and gives them some of the alms money; on receiving which the old man triumphantly carries off his wife. Ḥârith had discovered that it was Abû Zayd, but was afraid to tell the Kadi, because in that case he might have declined to relieve such an im-

postor. But when he is gone, Ḥârith cannot forbear suggesting that he should be followed and some news of him brought back. A messenger is sent and returns quickly to say that he found Abû Zayd dancing and singing in joy at his success. The Kadi treats the affair as a good jest; and declares that if he had known who he was he would have been still more liberal. This is the first appearance of Abû Zayd's young wife, who in the fortieth Assembly is made to rival her husband in wit, learning, and volubility.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: The liveliness of youth and the desire of gain sped me on until I had traversed all that is between Farghânah and Ghânah.—And I dived into depths to gather fruits, and plunged into perils to reach my needs.—Now I had caught from the lips of the learned, and understood from the commandments of the wise—That it behoves the well-bred, the sagacious, when he enters a strange city, to conciliate its Kadi and possess himself of his favour:—That his back may be strengthened in litigation, that he may be secure in a strange land from the wrong of the powerful.—So I took this doctrine as my guide and made it the leading-cord to my advantages.—And I entered not a city, I went not into a lair, but I mingled myself with its judge as water is mingled with wine, and strengthened myself by his patronage as bodies are strengthened by souls.—Now while I was in presence of the judge of Alexandria one cold evening, and he had brought out the alms-money to divide it among the needy,—Behold there entered an ill-looking old man whom a young matron dragged along.—And she said: God strengthen the Kadi and through him make concord to be lasting:—Know that I am a woman of stock the most noble, of root the most pure, of mother's and father's kin the most honourable:—My character is moderation, my disposition is

contentment; my nature is to be a goodly help-meet; between me and my neighbours is a wide difference.—Now whenever there wooed me any who had built up honour or were lords of wealth—My father silenced and chid them and misliked their suit and their gift:—Making plea that he had covenanted with God Most High that he would not ally himself save with the master of a handicraft.—Then did Providence destine for my calamity and pain that this deceiver should present himself in my father's hall;—And swear among his people that he fulfilled his condition:—Asserting that long time he had strung pearl to pearl and sold them for great price. —Then was my father deceived by the gilding of his falsehood, and married me to him before proving his condition.—And when he had drawn me forth from my covert, and carried me away from my people, and removed me to his habitation, and brought me under his bond,—I found him slothful, a sluggard; I discovered him to be a lie-a-bed, a slumberer.—Now I had come to him with apparel and goodly show, with furniture and affluence.—But he ceased not to sell it in a losing market and to squander the price in greedy feeding,—Until he had altogether destroyed whatever was mine, and spent my property on his need.—So when he had made to me to forget the taste of rest and left my house cleaner than my hand's palm;—I said to him, "Sir, know that there is no concealment after distress, no perfume after the wedding.—Rise up then to gain something by thy trade, to gather the fruit of thy skill."—But he declared that his trade had been struck with slackness through the violence that was abroad in the earth.—Also I have a boy by him, thin as a toothpick: neither

of us gets a fill by him, and through hunger our weeping to him ceases not.—So I have brought him to thee and set him before thee, that thou mayest test the substance of his assertion, and decide between us as God shall show thee.

Then turned the Kadi to him and said: "Thou hast heard thy wife's story; now testify of thyself: else will I discover thy deceit and bid thy imprisonment."—But he looked down as looks the serpent; then girt up his garment for a long strife, and said:

Hear my story, for it is a wonder; there is laughter in its tale, and there is wailing.

I am a man on whose qualities there is no blame, neither is there suspicion on his glory.

Serûj is my home where I was born, and my stock is Ghassân when I trace my lineage:

And study is my business; to dive deep in learning is my pursuit; and, oh! how excellent a seeking.

And my capital is the magic of speech, out of which are moulded both verse and prose.

I dive into the deep of eloquence, and from it I choose the pearls and select them:

I cull of speech the ripe fruit and the new; while another gathers but firing of the wood:

I take the phrase of silver, and when I have moulded it men say that it is gold.

Now formerly I drew forth wealth by the learning I had gotten; I milked by it:

And my foot's sole in its dignity mounted to ranges above which were no higher steps.

Oft were the presents brought in pomp to my dwelling, but I accepted not everyone who gave.

But to-day learning is the chattel of slackest sale in the market of him on whom hope depends.

The honour of its sons is not respected; neither are relationship and alliance with them regarded.

It is as though they were corpses in their courtyards, from whose stench men withdraw and turn aside.

Now my heart is confounded through my trial by the times;—strange is their changing.

The stretch of my arm is straitened through the straitness of my hand's means; cares and grief assail me.

And my fortune, the blameworthy, has led me to the paths of that which honour deems base.

For I sold until there remained to me not a mat nor household goods to which I might turn.

So I indebted myself until I had burdened my neck by the carrying of a debt such that ruin had been lighter.

Then five days I wrapped my entrails upon hunger; but when the hunger scorched me,

I could see no goods except her outfit, in the selling of which I might go about and bestir myself.

So I went about with it; but my soul was loathing, and my eye tearful, and my heart saddened.

But when I made free with it, I passed not the bound of her consent, that her wrath should rise against me.

And if what angers her be her fancying that it was my fingers that should make gain by stringing;

Or that when I purposed to woo her I tinseled my speech that my need might prosper:

I swear by Him to whose Ka'beh the companies journey when the fleet camels speed them onward,

That deceit towards chaste ladies is not of my nature, nor are glozing and lying my badge.

Since I was reared nought has attached to my hand save the swiftly-moving reeds and the books:

For it is my wit that strings necklaces, not my hand; what is strung is my poetry and not chaplets.

And this is the craft I meant as that by which I gathered and gained.

So give ear to my explaining, as thou hast given ear to her; and show respect to neither, but judge as is due.

Now when he had completed the structure of his story and perfected his recitation, the Kadi turned to the young woman, being heart struck at the verses:—And said, Know that it is settled among all judges and those who bear authority—That the race of the generous is perished, and that the times incline to the

niggardly.—Now I imagine that thy husband is truthful in his speech, free from blame.—For lo! he has acknowledged the debt to thee, and spoken the clear truth; he has given proof that he can string verses, and it is plain that he is bared to the bone.—Now to vex him who shows excuse is baseness, to imprison the destitute is a sin: to conceal poverty is self-denial, to await relief with patience is devotion.—So return to thy chamber and pardon the master of thy virginity:—Refrain from thy sharpness of tongue and submit to the will of thy Lord.—Then in the almsgiving he assigned them a portion, and of the dirhems he gave them a pinch; and said to them, "Beguile yourselves with this drop, moisten yourselves with this driblet:—And endure against the fraud and the trouble of the time, for 'it may be that God will bring victory or some ordinance from himself.'"—Then they arose to go, and on the old man was the joy of one loosed from the bond, and the exulting of one who is in affluence after need.

Said the narrator: Now I knew that he was Abû Zayd in the hour that his sun peeped forth and his spouse reviled him:—And I went near to declare his versatility and the fruiting of his divers branches.—But then I was afraid that the Kadi would hit on his falsehood and the lackering of his tongue, and not see fit, when he knew him, to train him to his bounty.—So I forebore from speech with the forbearing of one who doubts, and I folded up mention of him as the roll is folded over the writing:—Save that when he had departed and had come whither he was to come,—I said, "If there were one who would set out on his track, he might bring us the kernel of his story, and

what tissues he is spreading forth.—Then the Kadi sent one of his trusty ones after him and bade him to spy out of his tidings.—But he delayed not to return bounding in, and to come back loudly laughing.—Said the Kadi to him, "Well, Abû Maryam !—He said, "I have seen a wonder; I have heard what gives me a thrill."—Said the Kadi to him, "What hast thou seen, and what is it thou hast learnt?"—He said, "Since the old man went forth he has not ceased to clap with his hands and to caper with his feet and to sing with the full of his cheeks:

I was near falling into trouble through an impudent jade;
And should have gone to prison but for the Kadi of Alexandria."

Then the Kadi laughed till his hat fell off, and his composure was lost:—But when he returned to gravity and had followed excess by prayer for pardon,—He said, "O God, by the sanctity of thy most honoured servants, forbid that I should imprison men of letters."—Then said he to that trusty one, "Hither with him !" and he set forth earnest in the search; but returned after a while, telling that the man was gone.—Then said the Kadi, "Know that if he had been here he should have had no cause to fear,—For I would have imparted to him as he deserves; I would have shown him that *the latter state is better for him than the former*."—Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, Now, when I saw the leaning of the Kadi towards him, and that yet the fruit of the Kadi's notice was lost to him,—There came on me the repentance of Al Farazdaḳ when he put away Nawâr, or of Al Kosa'î when the daylight appeared.

THE TENTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF RAḤBAH."

In this Assembly Abû Zayd is found making gain by his usual questionable arts. At Raḥbah, on the Euphrates, Ḥârith beholds a crowd following an elderly man who is dragging along a handsome youth. The former accuses the boy of having killed his son, and it is agreed to go before the Governor. The purpose of the elder, who proves in the end to be Abû Zayd, is simply to induce the Governor to buy off so handsome a youth from punishment, with the view of taking him into his own household. When they are in court the old man makes his charge, and as he has no witnesses the boy is allowed to clear himself by an oath. But the old man dictates an oath in which he enumerates all the beauties of the boy, and invokes destruction on them if truth be not spoken. The boy refuses to swear by such an oath; and the Governor, who desires to take him out of the power of the old man, then makes up a purse to satisfy the prosecutor. A hundred denars are promised; but as the whole cannot be collected at once the old man says that he will not give up the boy, but will watch him all night. The Governor consents, and soon the two are left together in the courtyard. Ḥârith then accosts Abû Zayd, and asks who is the boy. Abû Zayd replies, that he is his son, and his assistant in his tricks; and that they intend to make their escape early in the morning, and leave the Governor to his disappointment. This they do, and before setting forth Abû Zayd delivers to Ḥârith a sealed paper to be presented to the outwitted magistrate. Ḥârith, dreading to present it, opens it and finds it to contain a copy of satirical verses on the Governor. He tears the paper to pieces, regardless of his promise to his friend. This Assembly is exceedingly elaborate in its diction, and the terms of the oath dictated by Abû Zayd have much poetical beauty. It has been imitated with great felicity by Rückert, whose version has almost the spirit of the original.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related:—The summoning of desire called me to Raḥbah, the city of Mâlik, son of Ṭowḳ,—And I obeyed it, mounted on a fleet camel, and unsheathing an active purpose.—Now when I had cast my anchors there, and fastened my ropes,

and had gone forth from the bath after shaving my head,—I saw a boy cast in the mould of comeliness, and clothed by beauty in the garb of perfection;—And an old man was holding on to his sleeve, asserting that he had slain his son;—But the boy denied knowledge of him and was horror-struck at his suspicion;—And the contention between them scattered its sparks, and the crowding upon them was made up of good and bad.—Now after their quarrelling had been excessive, they agreed to refer to the Governor of the town;—So they hastened to his court with the speed of Sulayk in his career;—And when they were there the old man renewed his charge and claimed help.—So the Governor made the boy speak, for the boy had already fascinated him by the graces of his bright brow, and cloven his understanding by the disposition of his forelocks.—And the boy said, "It is the lie of a great liar against one who is no blood-shedder, and the slander of a knave against one who is not an assassin.—Then said the Governor to the old man, "If two just Moslems testify for thee, well; if not, demand of him the oath."—Said the old man, "Surely he struck him down remote from men, and shed his blood when alone;—And how can I have a witness, when on the spot there was no beholder?—But empower me to dictate an oath that it may appear to thee whether he speaks true or lies."—He said to him, "Thou hast authority for that; thou with thy vehement grief for thy slain son."—Then said the old man to the boy: Say, I swear by Him who hath adorned foreheads with forelocks, and eyes with their black and white, and eyebrows with separation, and smiling teeth with regularity, and eyelids with languor,

and noses with straightness, and cheeks with flame, and mouths with purity, and fingers with softness, and waists with slenderness, that I have not killed thy son by negligence, nor of wilfulness, nor made his head a sheath to my sword;—If it be otherwise, may God strike my eyelid with soreness, and my cheek with freckles, and my forelocks with dropping, and my palm shoot with greenness, and my rose with the ox-eye, and my musk with a foul steam, and my full moon with waning, and my silver with tarnishing, and my rays with the dark.

Then said the boy, "The scorching of affliction be my lot rather than to take such an oath! let me yield to vengeance rather than swear as no one has ever sworn!"—But the old man would nought but make him swallow the oath which he had framed for him, and the draughts which he had bittered.—And the dispute ceased not to blaze between them, and the road of concord to be rugged.—Now the boy, while thus resisting, captivated the Governor by his motions, and made him covet that he should belong to him; until love subdued his heart and fixed in his breast;—And the passion which enslaved him, and the desire which he had imagined tempted him to liberate the boy and then get possession of him, to free him from the noose of the old man, and then catch him himself.—So he said to the old man, "Hast thou a mind for that which is more seemly in the stronger and nearer to god-fearing?"—He said, "Whither art thou pointing that I should follow and not delay?"—He said, "I think it well that thou cease from altercation and be content with a hundred denars,—On condition that I take on

myself part of it, and collect the rest as may be."—Said the old man, "I refuse not; but let there be no failure to thy promise."—Then the Governor paid him down twenty and assigned among his attendants the making up of fifty.—But the robe of evening grew dim, and from this cause the rain of collection was cut short. —Then he said, "Take what is ready and leave disputing; and on me be it to-morrow to accomplish that the rest be doled to thee and reach thee."—Said the old man, "I will do this on the condition that I keep close to him to-night, that the pupil of my eye guard him,— Until when on the dawning of the morn he has made up what remains of the sum of reconciliation,—Shell may get clear of chick, and he may go guiltless as the wolf went guiltless of the blood of the son of Jacob."— Then said to him the Governor, "I think that thou dost not impose what is immoderate or ask what is excessive."

Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Now when I perceived that the pleadings of the old man were as the pleadings of Ibn Surayj, I knew him to be the Glory of the Serûjis:—And I delayed until the stars of the darkness glittered, and the knots of the crowd dispersed:—And then I sought the Governor's court-yard; and lo! the old man guarding the youth.—And I adjured him by God to say whether he was Abû Zayd: he said, "Yes, by Him who hath permitted the chase."— I said, "Who is this boy, after whom the understanding darts?"—He said, "In kin he is my chick, and in making gain my springe."—I said, "Wilt thou not be satisfied with the graces of his make, and spare the Governor temptation by his forelock."—He said, "Were it not that

his forehead put forth its ringlets, I should not have snatched the fifty."—Then he said, "Pass the night near me that we may quench the fire of grief, and give enjoyment its turn after separation.—For I have resolved to slip away at dawn, and to burn the Governor's heart with the flame of regret."—Said Al Ḥârith, Then I spent the night with him in conversation more pleasant than a garden of flowers, or a woodland of trees:—Until when the Wolf's Tail lighted the horizon, and the brightening of the day-break came on in its time, —He mounted the back of the highway, and left the Governor to taste burning torment.—And he committed to me, in the hour of his departure a paper firmly closed,—And said, "Hand it to the Governor when he has been bereft of composure, when he has convinced himself of our flight."—But I broke the seal as one who would free himself from a letter of Mutelemmis, and behold there was written in it:

Tell the Governor whom I have left, after my departure, repenting, grieving, biting his hands,

That the old man has stolen his money and the young one his heart; and he is scorched in the flame of a double regret.

He was generous with his coin (عين) when love blinded his eye (عين), and he has ended with losing either عين.

Calm thy grief, O afflicted, for it profits not to seek the traces after the substance is gone.

But if what has befallen thee is terrible to thee as the ill-fate of Al Ḥosayn is terrible to the Moslems;

Yet hast thou gotten in exchange for it understanding and caution; and the wise man, the prudent, wishes for these.

So henceforth resist desires, and know that the chasing of gazelles is not easy;

No, nor does every bird enter the springe, even though it be surrounded by silver.

And how many a one who seeks to make a prey becomes a prey himself, and meets with nought but the shoes of Ḥonayn!

Now consider well, and forecast not every thundercloud: many a thundercloud may have in it the bolts of death:

And cast down thine eye, that thou mayest rest from a passion by which thou wouldest clothe thyself with the garment of infamy and disgrace.

For the trouble of man is the following of the soul's desire; and the seed of desire is the longing look of the eye.

Said the narrator,—But I tore the paper piece-meal, and cared not whether he blamed or pardoned me.

THE ELEVENTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF SÂWEH."

This and the following Assembly are justly reckoned among the master-pieces of the author. To pass suddenly from the most solemn subjects to pleasantry, to place in the mouth of a clever impostor the most serious warnings that can be addressed to mankind may be morally objectionable; but in the Moslem world, where religion is mixed up with all the concerns of life, and pious discourse and phrases abound, it excites little repugnance. The design of the author in the present composition was to produce an elaborate sermon in rhymed prose and in verse, and his genius takes a higher flight than usual. The incident on which the Assembly is founded is simple. Ḥârith, in a fit of religious zeal, betakes himself to the public burial ground of the city of Sâweh, for the purpose of contemplation. He finds a funeral in progress, and when it is over, an old man, with his face muffled in a cloak, takes his stand on a hillock, and pours forth a discourse on the certainty of death and judgment; rebuking his hearers for their worldly selfishness, and warning them that wealth and power are of little avail against the general leveller. He then rises into poetry and declaims a piece which is one of the noblest productions of Arabic literature. In lofty morality, in religious fervour, in beauty of language, in power and grace of metre, this magnificent hymn is unsurpassed. From this, and other similar compositions of Ḥarîri, a better idea of what is noblest and purest in Islam will be gained, than from all the works of the most orthodox doctors. Ḥârith, like the others who are present, is much affected; but he is indignant when he finds that the preacher is re-

ceiving abundant alms, and that beyond a doubt he is Abû Zayd. He taxes him with his hypocrisy, and receives an impudent reply. They then separate angrily. In this Assembly a view of moral duties and future judgment is exhibited which differs little from that of Christians. The enlightened and polished man of letters of the fifth century was not likely to teach the coarse doctrines of a sensual paradise, to be secured by hard fighting, which roused the ignorant warriors of Arabia in the first days of Islam. In all the work of Ḥarîri, there is not a trace of this theology, which the West erroneously attributes to every Moslem. Self-denial and benevolence are with him the duties of every man; and by them each may hope to obtain everlasting happiness, but on the nature of both future rewards and punishments he is discreetly silent.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I was aware of hardness of heart while I sojourned at Sâweh.—So I betook myself to the Tradition handed down, that its cure is by visiting the tombs.—And when I had reached the mansion of the dead, the storehouse of mouldering remains, I saw an assemblage over a grave that had been dug, and a corpse that was being buried.—So I drew aside to them, meditating on the end of man, and calling to mind those of my people who were gone.—And when they had sepulchred the dead, and the crying of Alas! was over, an old man stood forth on high, from a hillock, leaning on a staff.—And he had veiled his face with his cloak, and disguised his form for craftiness.—And he said: *Let those who work, work for an end like this.*—Now take thought, O ye negligent, and gird yourselves, ye slothful, and look well, ye observers.—How is it with you that the burying of your fellows grieves you not, and that the pouring in of the mould frightens you not; that ye heed not the visitations of misfortune; that ye prepare not for the going down to your graves; that ye are not moved to tears at the eye that weeps; that ye take not warning at the

death-message when it is heard; that ye are not affrighted when an intimate is lost; that ye are not saddened when the mourning assembly is gathered?—One of you follows home the dead man's bier, but his heart is set towards his house;—And he is present at the burying of his kinsman, but his thought is of securing his portion.—He leaves his loved friend with the worms, then retires alone with his pipes and lutes.—Ye have sorrowed over your riches, if but a grain were notched away, yet have ye been forgetful of the cutting off of your friends:—And ye have been cast down at the befalling of adversity, but have made little of the perishing of your kindred.—Ye have laughed at a funeral as ye laughed not in the hour of dancing; ye have walked wantonly behind biers, as ye walked not in the day that ye grasped gifts.—Ye have turned from the recital of the mourning women to the preparing of banquets; and from the anguish of the bereaved to daintiness in feastings.—Ye care not for him who moulders, and ye move not the thought of death in your mind.—So that it is as if ye were joined to Death by clientship, or had gotten security from Time, or were confident of your own safety, or had made sure of a peace with the Destroyer of delights.—No! it is an ill thing that ye imagine.—Again, no! surely ye shall learn. Then he recited:

O thou who claimest understanding; how long, O brother of delusion, wilt thou marshal sin and blame, and err exceeding error?

Is not the shame plain to thee? doth not hoariness warn thee? (and in its counsel there is no doubtfulness); nor hath thy hearing become deaf.

Is not Death calling thee? doth he not make thee hear his voice? dost thou not fear thy passing away, so as to be wary and anxious?

How long wilt thou be bewildered in carelessness, and walk

proudly in vanity, and go eagerly to diversion, as if death were not for all?

Till when will last thy swerving, and thy delaying to mend habits that unite in thee vices whose every sort shall be collected in thee?

If thou anger thy Master thou art not disquieted at it; but if thy scheme be bootless thou burnest with vexation.

If the graving of the yellow one gleam to thee thou art joyful; but if the bier pass by thee thou feignest grief, and there is no grief.

Thou resistest him who counselleth righteousness; thou art hard in understanding; thou swervest aside: but thou followest the guiding of him who deceiveth, who lieth, who defameth.

Thou walkest in the desire of thy soul; thou schemest after money; but thou forgettest the darkness of the grave, and rememberest not what is there.

But if true happiness had looked upon thee, thy own look would not have led thee amiss; nor wouldest thou be saddened when the preaching wipeth away griefs.

Thou shalt weep blood, not tears, when thou perceivest that no company can protect thee in the Court of Assembling; no kinsman of mother or father.

It is as though I could see thee when thou goest down to the vault and divest deep; when thy kinsmen have committed thee to a place narrower than a needle's eye.

There is the body stretched out that the worms may devour it, until the coffin-wood is bored through and the bones moulder.

And afterward there is no escape from that review of souls: since Ṣirâṭ is prepared; its bridge is stretched over the fire to every one who cometh thither.

And how many a guide shall go astray! and how many a great one shall be vile! and how many a learned one shall slip and say "The business surpasseth."

Therefore hasten, O simple one, to that by which the bitter is made sweet; for thy life is now near to decay and thou hast not withdrawn thyself from blame.

And rely not on fortune though it be soft, though it be gay: for so wilt thou be found like one deceived by a viper that spitteth venom.

And lower thyself from thy loftiness; for death is meeting thee and reaching at thy collar; and he is one who shrinketh not back when he hath purposed.

And avoid proud turning away of the cheek if fortune have prospered thee: bridle thy speech if it would run astray; for how happy is he who bridleth it!

And relieve the brother of sorrow, and believe him when he speaketh; and mend thy ragged conduct; for he hath prospered who mendeth it.

And plume him whose plumage hath fallen in calamity great or small; and sorrow not at the loss, and be not covetous in amassing.

And resist thy base nature, and accustom thy hand to liberality, and listen not to blame for it, and keep thy hand from hoarding.

And make provision of good for thy soul, and leave that which will bring on ill, and prepare the ship for thy journey, and dread the deep of the sea.

Thus have I given my precepts, friend, and shown as one who showeth clearly: and happy the man who walketh by my doctrines and maketh them his example.

Then he drew back his sleeve from an arm strong of sinew, on which he had fastened the splints of deceit not of fracture;—Presenting himself to beg in the garb of impudence:—And by it he beguiled those people until his sleeve was brimmed and full;—Then he came down from the hillock merry at the gift.—Said the narrator: But I pulled him from behind by the hem of his cloak; and he turned to me submissively, and faced me, saluting me:—And lo! it was our old Abû Zayd, in his very self, and in all his deceit: and I said to him,

How many, Abû Zayd, will be the varieties of thy cunning to drive the prey to thy net? and wilt thou not care who censures?

And he answered without shame and without hesitation:

Look well, and leave thy blaming; for, tell me, hast thou ever known a time when a man would not win of the world when the game was in his hands.

Then I said to him: Away with thee, Old Shaykh of Hell, laden with infamy!—For there is nothing like thee for the fairness of thy seeming and the foulness of thy purpose; except silvered dung or a whited sewer.—Then we parted; and I went away to the right, and he

went away to the left; and I set myself to the quarter of the south, and he set himself to the quarter of the north.

THE TWELFTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF DAMASCUS."

Ḥârith, being in affluence, crosses from Irak to Damascus to enjoy the luxury of that city. After he has had his fill of pleasure he bethinks himself of returning homeward, and joins a caravan that is about to cross the Semâweh, the desert which lies between Syria and the Euphrates. The travellers are ready to depart, but are delayed by their inability to find an escort, which they think indispensable for their protection against robbers. While they are consulting they are watched by a dervish, who at last announces to them that he has the means of keeping them safe from harm; and, on their inquiring further, tells them that his safeguard is a magic form of words revealed to him in a dream. They are at first incredulous, but at length consent to take him with them, and to use his incantation. He then repeats it, and it proves to be a prayer full of assonances and rhymes, beseeching the general protection of the Almighty. They all learn it by heart and then set forth, repeating it twice a day on their journey. As they are not molested on the road they judge the charm to have been successful; and when they come in sight of 'Ânah, the first town on the other side of the desert, they reward him richly with what he likes best, gold and jewels. When he has taken all he can get, he makes his escape, and the next thing they hear of him is that he is drinking in the taverns of 'Ânah, a city celebrated for its wine. Ḥârith, shocked at this enormity in a pious dervish, determines to seek him out, and soon finds him revelling amid wine and music in the guest chamber of a wine-shop. He taxes him with his wickedness, and then the old man improvises a Bacchanalian chant, which is one of the finest pieces in Ḥarîri's work. In form this poem resembles that which is introduced into the last Assembly, though the metre is more light and lively, as Ḥarîri, no doubt, desired to display his genius by the contrast. Ḥârith, charmed with the verses, asks who the old man is; and from his answer discovers that he is Abû Zayd. He makes an ineffectual attempt to reclaim him, and then quits the wine-shop, repentant at having set foot in such a place. This Assembly is one of the most

admired productions of the author, who has lavished on it all the resources of his marvellous rhetoric. It has been imitated with great skill by Rückert; who, however, wanders very far from the original.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related:—I journeyed from Irak to the Ghûṭah; and then was I master of haltered steeds and envied wealth.—Freedom of arm called me to diversion, fullness of store led me to pride.—And when I had reached the place after toil of soul, after making lean my camel,—I found it such as tongues describe it; and in it was whatever souls long for or eyes delight in.—So I thanked the bounty of travel and ran a heat with pleasure:—And began there to break the seals of desires and gather the clusters of delights.—Until some travellers were making ready for the journey to Irak, and I had so recovered from my drowning, that regret visited me in calling to mind my home and longing after my fold.—Then I struck the tents of exile and saddled the steeds of return.—And when the company had equipped themselves and agreement was completed, we shrank from setting forth without taking with us a guard.—And we sought one from every tribe and used a thousand devices to obtain him.—But to find him in the clans failed, so that we thought he was not among the living.—And for the want of such a one the resolves of the travellers were bewildered, and they assembled at the gate of Jayrûn to take counsel.—And they ceased not tying and untying, and plaiting and twining, until suggestion was exhausted and the hoper despaired.—But opposite them was a person whose demeanour was as the demeanour of the youthful, and his garb as the garb of monks, and in his hand was the rosary of women, and in his eyes the mark of giddiness from watchings.—

And he had fastened his gaze on the assemblage and sharpened his ear to steal a hearing.—And when it was the time of their turning homeward and their secret was manifest to him,—He said to them, "O people, let your care relieve itself, let your mind be tranquil; for I will guard you with that which shall put off your fear and show itself in accord with you."—Said the narrator: Then we asked him to show us concerning his safe conduct, and promised him a higher wage for it than for an embassy.—And he declared it to be some words which he had been taught in a dream, whereby to guard himself from the malice of mankind.—Then began one to steal a look at another, and to move his eyes between glances sideward and downward.—So that it was plain to him that we thought meanly of his story, and conceived it to be futile.—Whereupon he said, How is it that ye take my earnest for jest, and treat my gold as dross?—Now, by Allah, oft have I gone through fearful tracts and entered among deadly dangers:—And with this I have needed not the companying of a guard or to take with me a quiver.—Besides, I will remove what gives you doubt, I will draw away the distrust that has come on you,—In that I will consent with you in the desert and accompany you on the Semâweh.—Then, if my promise has spoken you true, do ye renew my weal and prosper my fortune:—But if my mouth has lied to you, then rend my skin and pour out my blood.

Said Al Hârith, son of Hammâm: Then we were inspired to believe his vision and take as true what he had related;—So we ceased from disputing with him and cast lots for carrying him.—And at his word we cut the loops of hindrance, and put away fear of harm or

stay;—And when the pack saddles were fastened on and the setting forth was near, we sought to learn from him the magic words that we might make them a lasting safeguard.—He said: Let each of you repeat the Mother of the Koran as often as day or night comes on;—Then let him say with lowly tongue and humble voice,—O God! O thou who givest life to the mouldering dead! O thou who avertest harms! O thou who guardest from terrors! O thou generous in rewarding! O thou the refuge of suppliants! O thou the Lord of pardon and protection! Send thy blessing on Mohammed, the Seal of thy prophets, the Bringer of thy messages, and on the Lights of his kindred, the Keys of his victory;—And give me refuge, O God, from the mischiefs of devils and the assaults of princes; from the vexing of the wrongers, and from suffering through the tyrannous; from the enmity of transgressors, and from the transgression of enemies; from the conquest of conquerors, from the spoiling of spoilers, from the crafts of the crafty, from the treacheries of the treacherous;—And deliver me, O God, from the wrongfulness of neighbours and the neighbourhood of the wrongful;—And keep from me the hands of the harmful; bring me forth from the darkness of the oppressors; place me by thy mercy among thy servants who do aright.—O God, keep me in my own land and in my journeying, in my exile and my coming homeward, in my foraging and my return from it, in my trafficking and my success from it, in my adventuring and my withdrawing from it.—And guard me in myself and my property, in my honour and my goods, in my family and my means, in my household and my dwelling, in my strength and my fortune, in

my riches and my death.—Bring not on me reverse; make not the invader lord over me, but give me from thyself helping power.—O God, watch over me with thy eye and thy aid, distinguish me by thy safeguard and thy bounty, befriend me with thy election and thy good, and consign me not to the keeping of any but thee.—But grant to me health that weareth not away, and allot to me comfort that perisheth not; and free me from the terrors of misfortune, and shelter me with the coverings of thy boons; make not the talons of enemies to prevail against me, for thou art He that heareth prayer.

Then he looked down, and he turned not a glance, he answered not a word:—So that we said, "A fear has confounded him or a stupor struck him dumb."—Then he raised his head and drew his breath, and said, I swear by the heaven with its constellations, and the earth with its plains, and the pouring flood, and the blazing sun, and the sounding sea, and the wind and the dust-storm,—That this is the most sure of charms, one that will best suffice you for the wearers of the helmet.—He who repeats it at the smiling of the dawn has no alarm of danger to the red of eve;—And he who whispers it to the vanguard of the dark is safe the night long from plunder.

Said the narrator: So we learned it till we knew it thoroughly, and rehearsed it together that we might not forget it.—Then we set forth, urging the beasts by prayers, not by the song of drivers; and guarding the loads by words, not by warriors.—And our companion frequented us evening and morning, but required not of us our promises:—Till when we spied the house-tops of 'Ânah, he said to us, "Now, your help, your help!"—Then we set before him the exposed and the hidden, and

showed him the corded and the sealed.—And said to him, "Decide as thou wilt, for thou wilt find among us none but will consent."—But nothing enlivened him but the light, the adorning; nothing was comely in his eye but the coin.—So of those he loaded on his burden, and rose up with enough to repair his poverty.—Then he dodged us as dodges the cut-purse, and slipped away from us as slips quicksilver.—And his departure saddened us, his shooting away astonished us:—And we ceased not to seek him in every assembly, and to ask news of him from each that might mislead or guide.—Until it was said, "Since he entered 'Ânah he has not quitted the tavern."—Then the foulness of this report set me on to test it, and to walk in a path to which I belonged not.—So I went by night to the wine-hall in disguised habit; and there was the old man in a gay-coloured dress amid casks and wine vats;—And about him were cup-bearers surpassing in beauty, and lights that glittered, and the myrtle and the jasmine, and the pipe and the lute.—And at one time he bade broach the wine casks, and at another he called the lutes to give utterance; and now he inhaled the perfumes, and now he courted the gazelles.—But when I had thus stumbled on his hypocrisy, and the differing of his to-day from his yesterday;—I said to him, Woe to thee, accursed! hast thou forgotten the day at the Jayrûn?—But he laughed heartily, and then indited charmingly:

I cling to journeying, I cross deserts, I loathe pride that I may cull joy:

And I plunge into floods, and tame steeds that I may draw the trains of pleasure and delight.

And I throw away staidness, and sell my land, for the sipping of wine, for the quaffing of cups.

And were it not for longing after the drinking of wine my mouth would not utter its elegancies;

Nor would my craft have lured the travellers to the land of Irak, through my carrying of rosaries.

Now be not angry, nor cry aloud, nor chide, for my excuse is plain:

And wonder not at an old man who settles himself in a well-filled house by a wine cask that is brimming.

For truly wine strengthens the bones and heals sickness and drives away grief.

And the purest of joy is when the grave man throws off the veils of shame and flings them aside:

And the sweetest of passion is when the love-crazed ceases from the concealing of his love, and shows it openly.

Then avow thy love and cool thy heart: or else the fire-staff of thy grief will rub a spark on it;

And heal thy wounds, and draw out thy cares by the daughter of the vine, her the desired:

And assign to thy evening draught a cup-bearer who will stir the torment of desire when she gazes;

And a singer who will raise such a voice that the mountains of iron shall thrill at it when she chants.

And rebel against the adviser who will not permit thee to approach a beauty when she consents.

And range in thy cunning even to perverseness; and care not what is said of thee, and catch what suits thee:

And leave thy father if he refuse thee, and spread thy nets and hunt who comes by thee.

But be sincere with thy friend, and avoid the niggardly, and bestow kindness, and be constant in gifts;

And take refuge in repentance before thy departure; for whoso knocks at the door of the Merciful causes it to open.

Then I said to him, "O rare thy recitation, but fie on thy misconduct!—Now, by Allah, tell me from what thicket is thy root, for thy puzzle vexes me."—He said I love not to disclose myself; yet I will intimate it:

I am the novelty of the time, the wonder of nations;

I am the wily one, who plays his wiles among Arabs and foreigners;

But not the less a brother of need, whom fortune vexes and wrongs,

And the father of children who lie out like meat on the tray:
Now the brother of want, who has a household, is not blamed if he be wily.

Said the narrator: Then I knew that it was Abû Zayd, the man of ill-fame and disgrace, he that blackens the face of his hoariness.—And the greatness of his contumacy offended me, and the foulness of the path of his resorting:—So I said to him with the tongue of indignation and the confidence of acquaintance: "Is it not time, old man, that thou withdraw from debauchery?"—But he was angry, and growled, and his countenance changed, and he thought a while:—And then he said, "It is a night for merriment, not for rebuke, an occasion for drinking wine, not for contention; so leave speaking thy thought until we meet to-morrow."—Then I left him, through fear of his drunken humour, not through dependence on his promise;—And I passed my night clothed in the mourning of repentance, at having advanced the steps of my foot to the daughter of the vine, not of grace.—And I made a vow to God Almighty that I would never again enter the tavern of a liquor-seller, even that I might be endowed with the dominion of Bagdad;—And that I would not look upon the vats of wine, even that the season of youth might be restored to me.—Then we saddled the white camels in the last darkness of night, and left together those two old ones, Abû Zayd and Iblîs.

THE THIRTEENTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF BAGDAD."

This Assembly is remarkable for an enigmatical address, which is difficult to be understood, even by one acquainted with the original. Ḥârith is conversing with some poets, when an old woman, followed by some lean and feeble children, makes her appearance. She at once begins to solicit alms, and sets forth her former prosperity and her present distress in a composition the peculiarity of which is that she introduces into it the names of parts of the human body, each of which is to be taken, and is intelligible only when taken, in another sense. Thus the word ناظر which means *eye-ball,* means also *he who looks upon one with respect,* and must be understood in this second sense; the word حاجب has the meanings of *eye-brow* and *attendant,* the latter of which must be understood. The passage, though not much in accordance with European tastes, belongs to an order of composition which the Arabs, seduced by the extraordinary richness of their language, have much affected. The close of the address introduces, in an equally artificial manner, the names of colours. The old woman afterwards recites some charming verses, and obtains alms from the people. She is followed by Hârith, who discovers her to be Abû Zayd, the impostor, who, when alone, is heard to improvise some verses on his own cleverness.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I was in company, on the banks of the Zowrâ, with some Shaykhs of the poets.—They were such that no rival would keep up even with their dust, no disputant would run with them in the training-ground.—And we flowed in a discourse that shamed the flowers, until we had halved the day.—Now, when the yield of our thoughts was failing, and our souls were desiring after their nests,—We caught sight of an old woman, who approached from afar, and trotted the trot of a good steed.—And she was leading behind her some children, thinner than spindles,

weaker than the young of doves.—And when she saw us, she failed not to make towards us;—And when she stood before us, she said: God save the faces present, though they are not of my acquaintance!—Know, O ye who are the refuge of the hoping, the stay of the widowed, that I am of the Princes of the tribes, the ladies that are kept jealously:—My people and my husband were wont to settle on the Breast, and to journey at the Heart, to burden the Back, to advance the Hand; but when Fortune destroyed the Arms, and pained the Liver by means of the Limbs; and turned about till Back was Belly; then the Eye-ball grew dim, and the Eye-brow restless, and the Eye went forth, and the Palm was lost, and the Fore-arm grew dry, and the Right hand broke, and the Elbows departed, and there remained to us neither Front tooth nor Eye tooth.—Now, since the Green life has become Dust-coloured, and the Yellow loved one has been Tarnished, my White day is made Black, and my Black temple is made White, so that the Blue-eyed enemy has pitied me, and now welcome the Red death![1] And there follow me those

[1] The explanation of this speech is as follows:—

My people and my husband were wont to sit in the first place in the assembly; to march at the centre, or head quarters of the army; they mounted their friends on the backs of their camels; they conferred favours: but when Fortune destroyed those who helped them, and afflicted them by taking away their children and servants, who laboured for them, and brought them gain; and when their state was completely overthrown; then, whoever looked to them with respect withdrew; and their attendants were insolent; and their coin left them; and their quiet was lost; and their fire-staff gave no spark; their power was broken; their comforts and conveniences were scattered; there remained not a camel, young or aged. Now, since the life of plenty has become barren, and the loved gold coin has turned aside from me, my happy day has been saddened,

of whom ye see that their look is a sufficient examining, that their yellowness is their interpreter:—The furthest desire of each is a mess, the extreme of his wish is a mantle.—Now I had sworn that I would not give my cheek to shame, except before the generous, even though I should die of misery.—But the soul that dwells in me has whispered me that succour will be found with you, and the discerning of my heart has announced to me that ye are the fountains of gifts.—Now may God brighten him who will make my vow sinless, and verify my observing;—And who will look on me with an eye into which parsimony sets a mote, while bounty plucks it out.

Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Now we were astonished at the excellence of her signifying and at the beauties of her metaphor.—So we said to her, "Thy prose has enchanted us, but how is thy versifying?"—She said, "Without a boast, it would make a rock to gush forth."—We said, "If thou wilt place us among thy Reciters, we will not be niggardly in imparting to thee."—She said, "I will first show you my worn out garment, and then give you to recite my poems."—Then she put forth the sleeve of a well worn smock, and unveiled the look of a crafty old woman, and indited:

I complain to God, with the complaining of the sick, against the trouble of the unjust, the hateful time.

O friends, I am of people who prospered long time, while the eyelid of fortune was cast down before them:

Their glory there was none to forbid, and their fame was spread abroad among men.

and the black hair of my temples has been whitened, so that the blue-eyed Greek, my enemy, has pitied me, and now welcome death in war.

When foraging failed in the ashy year they were a goodly meadow:

Their fires were kindled to the travellers, and they fed the guest with fresh meat:

Their neighbour passed not his night in hunger, nor through fear did he say, "Choking hinders me."

But the changes of destruction have made their seas of bounty to sink away from them, which I thought not would ever sink:

And put away from among them, into the bowels of the earth, those that were lions of guarding, healers of the sick.

That on which I carry is now my back, after being my beast, and my home is in the hollow, after being on the height.

My little ones fail not to mourn their misery, of which there is some flash every day.

When the pious man prays to his Lord by night, they also call Him with gushing tears.

O Thou who feedest the young raven in the nest, and settest the bone which is broken, and again broken;

Appoint to us, O God, one whose honour is pure and washed from the filth of blame;

Who will quench for us the fire of hunger, though only with a mess of the sour milk or the butter milk.

Now is there any who will remove what is come upon us, and make prize of thanks long and large?

For, by Him to whom the forelocks shall bow down in the day when the faces of the assemblage shall be black and white,

Were it not for these, my cheek would not expose itself, nor would I assay to the stringing of verse.

Said the narrator: Now, by Allah, she cleft our hearts in pieces with her verses, and called forth the gifts of our bosoms:—So that he gave her alms whose habit was to beg alms himself, and he was brisk to bestow on her who we thought would not be so.—And when her bosom was filled full with gold, and each of us had shown bounty to her,—She retreated, the little ones following her, and her mouth was wide with thanks.—But after she was gone, the company were all a-stretch to fathom her, that they might prove where their bounty had fallen.—And I went surety to them for eliciting the hinted secret, and

rose up and followed the track of the old woman.—Until she came to a street choked with people, exceeding in its crowd.—Then she plunged into the throng, and slipped away from the simple children.—And she turned aside, with unconcern of mind, to a ruined mosque, and threw away her cloak, and drew off her veil.—But I spied at her through a chink of the door, and watched what strange thing she would bring to pass.—And when the gear of modesty fell off, I saw the face of Abû Zayd dawn out.—And I thought within myself that I would rush upon him and rebuke him for the course he was running.—But he threw himself back with the gesture of the contumacious, and raised the shrill note of singers, and broke forth, inditing thus:—

Oh! would I knew whether the time had gotten a knowledge of my power:
Whether it had learnt or learnt not the real truth how deep I go in deceiving:
How many of its sons I have won of by my wile and my fraud:
How oft I have sallied forth upon them in my known form and in disguise;
To catch one set by preaching, and others by poetry;
To excite one mind by vinegar, and another by wine;
Being at one time Ṣakhr, at another time the sister of Ṣakhr.
Now if I had followed the frequented path all the length of my life,
My fire and my portion would have failed, my need and my loss would have lasted.
So say to him who blames, "This is my excuse—take it."

Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Now when the clearness of his case appeared to me, and the marvel of his wickedness, and the excuse which he had tinseled in his verses,—I knew that his devil was a rebellious one, who would not listen to rebuke, and would do nought but what he willed.—So I turned my reins to my

companions, and published to them what my eye-witnessing had established.—Then they were sullen at the loss of their presents, and vowed one to another to deny old women.

THE FOURTEENTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF MECCA."

This Assembly has little that is remarkable. Ḥârith is on the pilgrimage to Mecca, and, after having fulfilled the usual rites, he and his friends are diverting themselves with conversation, in a tent, during the heat of the day. An old man and a boy make their appearance, and when they are asked what they want, the old man utters a complimentary speech, soliciting relief for himself and his son. They promise it, and he then recites some verses, lamenting that his camel had broken down,and that he should have to return from the pilgrimage on foot. They promise him a camel, and desire to know what is his son's request. The boy recites some verses, asking for various kinds of food in use among the ancient Arabs. Both receive what they desire from the company, and Ḥârith then asks whence they come. The old man, who is Abû Zayd, begins to tell them in verse of Serûj, and its destruction; but his tears hinder him from proceeding, and he departs abruptly. In this Assembly Abû Zayd and his son are not represented as practising any kind of knavery; and it may be assumed that they were really in want of a beast and food. This trait is in keeping with the thirty-first Assembly, which introduces Abû Zayd on the pilgrimage preaching to the assembled people. On that occasion he would not ask or even take alms, having made a vow of self-denial. In the present Assembly, though less strict, he will not commit an unworthy action in a sacred place. The lingering religious sentiment and sense of honour in Abû Zayd's character are always well observed by the author.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I rose up from the City of Peace for the pilgrimage of Islam:—And when, by the help of God, I had fulfilled my squalor and permitted myself perfumes and indulgence, there

came upon the encampment of the Khayf the blaze of summer;—And I made a shelter perforce of what might ward off the mid-day heat.—Now when I was under a leather tent with a company of the polite; and the furnace of the gravel was now hot, and the noon blinded the eye of the chameleon;—Lo! there broke in upon us a tottering old man, whom followed a youth in agile prime.—And the old man greeted with the greeting of the well-bred, the intelligent, and answered with the answering of a kinsman, not a stranger.—Then he pleased us by what he scattered from his chaplet, and we wondered at his unreserve before we had emboldened him.—And we said to him, "What art thou? and how hast thou made way in, and not asked leave?"—He said, "As for me, I am a suppliant, a seeker of help; the secret of my misery is not hidden, and a look at me is my sufficient intercessor:—And as for my intrusion, to which suspicion clings, why, it is not wonderful, seeing there can be no veil over the generous."—Then we asked him how he found his way to us, and by what he got direction towards us.—He said, "Truly generosity has a fragrance whose breathings steal forth, whose odours guide to its meadow;—And I was led by the exhaling of your perfume to the brightening of your bounty;—And the fragrant waving of your myrtle told me gladdeningly that the return from your presence would be happy."—Then we asked him concerning his want, that we might undertake to aid him.—He said, "I have a need and my boy a request."—We said, "Either wish shall be fulfilled, and each of you shall surely be contented:—But the elder, the elder:" He said, "Certainly; by Him who has spread out the seven earths."—Then he

leaped up to speak like the camel loosed from the foot-rope, and recited;

I am a man whose beast has fallen with soreness of foot and weariness;
My distance is a far one, my pace is unequal to it:
With me is not as much as a mustard seed of the stamped gold:
My contriving is closed up, my bewilderment plays with me.
If I set out on foot, I fear destructive haps;
And if I lag behind the company my way is straitened.
My sighing is on the heights, my tear is on the slopes.
But ye are the foraging ground of him that hopes, the target of seeking;
Your grist pours down as pour not down the clouds:
Your neighbour dwells in sanctuary, but your wealth is open to spoiling:
The terror-stricken does not take shelter with you, and then fear the tooth of calamities;
Nor does he that hopes seek the milk-flow of your gifts, and then fail to be gifted.
So now be ye moved by my story, and prosper my retiring from you;
For if ye had made trial of my life, in its meat and its drink,
Surely such distress as mine would pain you, distress that gives me up to sorrows.
And if ye were to learn my distinction, and my pedigree, and my path,
And what my knowledge embraces of choice studies,
No doubt would occur to you but that my breeding is my malady.
Now, would that I had not sucked at the breast of scholarship!
For its ill-luck has fallen on me; and in this thing was my father unduteous to me.

Then we said to him: "As for thee, thy verses have now disclosed thy poverty, and the perishing of thy she-camel;—So we will mount thee on that which will bring thee to thy city; and, now, what is the need of thy son?" —He said to him, "Rise, my boy, as thy father rose, and speak what is in thy mind; may thy mouth not be harmed!"—Then he rose up as rises the hero to the sally-

ing forth, and unsheathed a tongue like a cutting blade, and recited:

O ye Lords, whose dwellings are built up on high places!
Who, when danger befalls, take stand to ward off stratagem;
To whom is easy the bestowing of stored up treasures;
I desire of you a piece of roast, and a loaf, and a pudding:
But if that be too dear, then let it be cracknels, in which shall be hidden some roast lamb;
Or if there be neither this nor that, then my fill of tharîd:
But if these deny themselves altogether, then mere dates with their sauce.
Bring forth what is easy for you, even though it be but shreddings of dried meat;
And make it ready quickly, for my soul is longing for what is ready.
For there is no doing without provision for my far journey;
And ye are the best of kindred to be called on in necessity;
Your hands every day are full of new bounties;
Your palms bestow all useful gifts.
Now my wish will limit itself within the folds of that which ye shall give.
Through me may reward be gotten; and estimable is the consequence of relieving my sorrow;
And mine are young offsprings of the wit which put to shame every poem.

Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Now when we saw that the cub was like the lion, we mounted the father and provisioned the son;—And they requited the kindness with thanks, which they spread out as robes, and they paid for it its due.—And when they were intent on departure, and had fastened for the journey the waist-folds of the skirt,—I said to the old man, "Has our promise been like the promise of 'Orḳûb, or does there remain a need in the mind of Jacob?"—He said, "God forbid! surely not: nay, your kindness has been mighty and manifest."—I said to him, "Reward us as we have rewarded thee, profit us as we have profited thee!—

Where is thy cot? for perplexity has possessed us concerning thee."—Then he sighed with the sighing of one who calls to mind his home, and recited, while sobbing hindered his tongue:

Serûj is my dwelling; but how to make way to it!
For enemies have encamped in it, and marred it.
Now by the House to which I have journeyed to lay down my sins in it,
Nought has pleased my eye since I have left the bounds of Serûj.

Then his eyes were drowned with tears, and his tear-founts permitted their flowing:—And he was unwilling to let them drop, but he could not restrain them.—So he cut short his sweet reciting, and was brief in his farewell and withdrew.

THE FIFTEENTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "THE LEGAL."

This long and elaborate composition has a very slight foundation. The author, desirous to amuse his readers with a very ordinary legal puzzle, imagines a long adventure to introduce it. Ḥârith is passing a sleepless night, and strongly desires a companion to converse with, when a wanderer knocks at the door. He opens, and when the light is brought he discovers the visitor to be Abû Zayd. Rejoicing at so pleasant an encounter he offers him food, but finds that Abû Zayd will eat nothing. He is offended; but Abû Zayd proceeds to explain his want of appetite by relating the adventures of the day. He had been as usual in destitution, and his hunger had been further excited by the sight of the dates and milk that were exposed in the market. At last, when almost exhausted, he had seen a man weeping. He had inquired the cause and found that the stranger was deploring the decay of learning, inasmuch as no one was able to solve for him a puzzle which had come into his possession. This was to explain how a man, dying childless, could leave a brother perfectly competent to inherit, and yet that his property should go to his wife's brother. Abû Zayd at once perceives the

answer, but demands a supper before revealing it. The stranger takes him home and treats him to dates and cream, which he eats greedily, and then explains that the deceased man in the puzzle had had a son by a former wife, who had married the mother of his, the father's, second wife and then died, leaving a son who would be the brother of the second wife, and the grandson of the deceased whose property was in question. This child would therefore inherit in preference to the deceased's brother. Abû Zayd relates that when he had given the stranger the solution of the puzzle, he had been turned out in the rain, and had wandered from house to house seeking shelter, until chance had taken him to Hârith. They spend the night in conversation, and Ḥârith parts with him in the morning with regret. Sherîshi, in his commentary, remarks with justice on the inordinate length of this Assembly, and gives one by Al Hamadâni, of only a few lines, as a contrast to it, observing that if Ḥarîri's had been shorter and Badî' az Zemân's longer, both would have been better. "Abû Moḥammed," he says, "is so long as to weary the hearer."

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I was wakeful in a certain night, that was black of robe, lowering a massive cloud, beyond the wakefulness of the lover who is driven from the door, who is tried by the aversion of mistresses.—And thoughts ceased not to rouse my sadness, and make my imagination roam among fantasies. —Until I formed a wish, through the unease of what I suffered, that I might be granted a talk-fellow from among the estimable, who should shorten the tedium of my night-dark night.—Now my wish was not ended, and I had not closed my eye, when a knocker knocked at the door, one with an humble voice.—And I said within myself, "Perchance the plant of wishing has now borne fruit, and the night of luck is moonlit."—And I rose up to him in haste, and said, "Who is it that now walks by night?"—He said, "A stranger, whom the night has veiled in darkness, whom the rain-flood has caught;—And he desires a sheltering, nothing else; and when it dawns

he will advance his journey."—Said Al Ḥârith: Now when his rays indicated his sun, and his title disclosed the secret of his page,—I knew that night-talking with him would be a prize, and watching with him a pleasure. —So I opened the door with smiling, and said, "Enter ye into them with peace."—And there entered a person whose lance time had bent, and the rain had wet through his mantle.—And he greeted with a glib tongue, and a sweet eloquence.—Then he thanked me for responding to his voice, and excused himself for night-walking out of season.—But I put near to him the kindled lantern, and contemplated him as one that examines money.— And I found that he was our Shaykh Abû Zayd, without question, without the guess of doubt.—So I received him as one who had possessed me of my utmost desire, and transported me from the vexing of sorrow to the quiet of joy.—Then he took to complaining of weariness, and I took to How? and Where?—He said, "Let me swallow down my spittle, for my road has wearied me."—And I thought that he had hunger in his belly, and was sluggish from this cause.—So I set before him what is set before the guest who comes sudden in the dark night.— But he shrank as shrinks the abashed, and declined as declines the overeaten.—And I was evil in thought at his refraining, and the change of his nature angered me:—Until I was near to be rough to him in speech, and to sting him with the venom of blame.—Then he discerned from the glances of my eye what pervaded my mind:—And he said, "O weak of confidence in them that love thee! turn from that which thou makest to stir thy heart and listen to me, O thou base-born!"—I said, "Go on, brother of empty talk."—Then he said,

Know that I passed yesternight an ally of want, a communer with fantasy.—And when the night had fulfilled its vow, and the morn had sunk its stars, I went forth at the time of sunrise to one of the markets,—To assay against any prey that might pass by, any generous man who might show bounty.—And I caught sight of dates whose ordering in rows was made comely, whose place of summering had been favourable.—And they united in proof of their goodness the purity of choice wine, and the ruddiness of cornelian.—And opposite them was milk that showed forth like the yellow gold, and disclosed a saffron hue,—Which praised him who cooked it with the tongue of its perfection, and justified the judgment of the buyer, even though he had paid down his heart's core for it.—Then appetite bound me with its cords, and thirst brought me under its dominion.—And I remained more bewildered than a lizard, more distracted than a lover;—Having no means to bring me to the reaching of my wish, and the delight of swallowing.—And now my foot obeyed me not for departure through the ardour of my inflaming.—But greediness and its violence chid me on, and hunger and its heat, to forage every land, to be content with a driblet from my watering.—And I ceased not all the length of that day to let down my bucket into rivers;—But it came not back even with a wetting, and drew not up a quenching for my thirst;—Until the sun bent to the setting, and my soul was weak with weariness.—Then at eve I went homeward with burning stomach: I returned irresolute, advancing one foot, drawing back the other.—And while I thus sped or stayed, while my breeze thus rose or fell, behold, there met me a Shaykh, who was lamenting with

the lamentation of the bereaved, and his eyes were flowing.—Then not even the Wolf's Disease that I was under, and the emptiness that melted me, engaged me from the attempt to become intimate with him, and from the desire after deceiving him.—So I said to him, "O stranger, in thy weeping there is surely a secret, and behind thy passion an ill:—So shew me thy disorder and take me among thy counsellors:—For thou wilt find in me a physician to cure or a helper to impart."—Then he said, "By Allah! my lamenting is not after livelihood that is gone, or fortune that is insolent;—But for the perishing of science and its blotting out, for the going down of its moons and its suns."—I said, "And what mishap has appeared? what question is obscure? so as to excite in thee grief for the loss of those who are gone."—Then he drew forth a scrap of paper from his sleeve, and swore by his father and mother,—That he had already laid it before the chiefs of the schools, but they could not distinguish its worn-out way-marks,—And had bidden the doctors of the ink-flasks to speak on it, but they were dumb beyond the dumbness of the tenants of the tombs.—I said to him, "Let me see it; for perhaps I shall suffice for it."—He said, "Thou art not extreme in thy request, and oft a shot is without a shooter."—Then he handed it to me, and lo! there was written on it:

Ho the learned, the lawyer, who surpassest in acuteness, and there is none like thee!

Give me a decision on a case which every judge shuns, at which every lawyer is bewildered:

A man died, leaving a brother, both by father and mother, who was a Moslem, free, pious;

And the deceased had a wife who had, O Doctor, a brother, really her own, without equivocation;

She got her legal share, and her brother took what was left of the inheritance instead of the deceased's brother.

Now relieve us by thy answer to what we ask; this is an ordinance of law, no fault can be found in it.

Now when I had read the verses on the paper and perceived their secret, I said to him, "Thou hast fallen on one who is knowing in it, thou hast alighted near one who is at home in it:—But yet I am burning in the entrails and have need of a supper; so grant me to sojourn with thee, then listen to my decision."—He said, "Thou art just in thy stipulating and hast shrunk from excess;—So go with me to my dwelling, that thou mayest get what thou desirest and come off as is fitting."—Said Abû Zayd: Then I accompanied him to his habitation as God hath commanded.—And he brought me into a house narrower than the ark of Moses, weaker than a spider's web.—But not the less did he mend the straitness of his dwelling by the largeness of his bestowal:—For he gave me my choice of the entertainment and of all the delicacies that are bought.—And I said, "I wish for the proud rider on the desired steed, and for the wholesome companion with the hurtful one that is companied with."—So he thought a long time, and then he said, "Perchance thou meanest the daughter of the palm-tree with the first milk that follows the kid."—I said to him, "Just these two I meant, and for their sake I trouble myself."—And he rose cheerful, then sat down angry: and said, "God prosper thee! Know that truth is nobility, but lying a pest;—Nor let hunger, which is the garment of the prophets and the ornament of the saints, carry thee to join thyself to him who lies, or to put on the nature of him who swerves from faith-keeping.—For

the free-born woman hungers, but will not eat by her breasts; and she holds back from baseness even though urged to it by need.—Besides, I am no simpleton for thee, nor one to wink at a dupe's bargain;—So come! I warn thee before the veil be rent, and the feud established between us;—And neglect not attention to my warning, and beware false speaking with me, beware!" —I said to him, "Now, by Him who has forbidden the eating of usury, but allowed the eating of milk, I have not spoken with falsehood, I have not shown thee deceitfully.—Thou shalt prove the truth of the business, and approve the giving of the milk and dates."—Then he was cheerful with the cheerfulness of one who is dealt with truly, and went off hastening to the market. —And nothing could be speedier than his return, bending under them; and his face was frowning, and he set them before me as one who would upbraid me;—And said, "Press host on host; so enjoy the delight of life." —Said Abû Zayd, Then I bared a glutton's arm, and charged as charges the voracious elephant;—But he, he glanced at me as glances the spiteful, and in his rage he would that I had choked.—Now when I had gulped down either kind, and left them a trace after the substance, I was speechless through perplexity at the coming on of night-time, and through thinking on the answer to the verses.—And he delayed not to rise and set before me the ink-flask and pens.—And he said, "Thou hast filled thy wallet, now dictate the answer.— Otherwise, prepare, if thou shirk, to own the debt for what thou hast eaten."—I said to him, There is nothing but earnest with me, so write (and the prospering be from God):

Say to him who riddles questions that I am the discloser of their secret which he hides.

Know that the deceased, in whose case the law preferred the brother of his spouse to the son of his father,

Was a man who, of his free consent, gave his son in marriage to his own mother-in-law; nothing strange in it.

Then the son died, but she was already pregnant by him, and gave birth to a son like him;

And he was the son's son without dispute, and brother of the grandfather's spouse without equivocation.

But the son of the true-born son is nearer to the grandfather, and takes precedence in the inheritance over the brother;

And therefore, when he died, the eighth of the inheritance was adjudged to the wife for her to take possession;

And the grandson, who was really her brother by her mother, took the rest;

And the full brother was left out of the inheritance, and we say thou hast only to bewail him.

This is my decision which every judge who judges will pattern by, every lawyer.

Said Abû Zayd: Now when he had understood the answer and verified its correctness, he said to me, "Remember thy family and the night, so gather up thy skirt and be beforehand with the rain-flood."—I said, "I am in the house of exile, and in sheltering me lies the best of offering,—Especially as the van of the darkness has now drooped, and the thunder is lauding God in the cloud."—He said, "Be off (may God keep thee) whither thou wilt; but desire not to pass the night here."—I said, "Why is that, seeing the emptiness of thy habitation?"—He said, "Because I looked well how thou didst swallow what was before thee, until thou didst leave and let alone nothing;—And I saw that thou dost not look to thy well-being, nor take care for the keeping of thy health.—Now, he that exceeds in what thou hast exceeded, and fills his belly as thou hast filled it, escapes

not a weakening surfeit or a killing cholera.—So, by Allah, leave me alone and go forth from me while thou art still kept from harm;—For by Him who gives life and death there is no lodging for thee in my house."—Now, when I had heard his oath, and made proving of him, I went forth from his house perforce, and with a victualling of sadness:—And the sky rained upon me, and the darkness made me to stumble, and the dogs barked after me, and the doors repulsed me,—Until the kindness of fate sent me to thee, and thanks to its white hand.

Then I said to him, "Charming is this ordained meeting with thee to my glad heart."—And he began to be diverse in his stories, and to mix the laughable with the mournful; until the first of the morning dawned, and the caller of "Blessing" made his cry.—Whereupon he made ready to respond to the caller, and then turned to bid me farewell.—But I checked him from departure and said, "Hospitality is three days."—But he adjured God, and restricted himself by a vow; then he sought the outlet, and indited as he lingered:

Visit him thou lovest in each month only a day, and exceed not that upon him;

For the beholding of the new moon is but one day in the month, and afterward eyes look not on it.

Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Then I took leave of him with a heart bleeding of its wound, and wished that my night had been tardy of its morn.

THE SIXTEENTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF THE WEST."

The purpose of this Assembly is to exhibit Abû Zayd in the performance of an extraordinary feat of scholarship, the recitation of some lines of poetry, each of which may be read forwards or backwards without change of sense. Ḥârith meets with four scholars in a mosque and takes seat with them. The conversation falls upon sentences which preserve their identity when reversed; and some one proposes that they should try their powers of composing them. This is agreed to, and the first man produces a sentence of three words, the next a sentence of four, the next a sentence of five, the next a sentence of six. It then comes to the turn of Ḥârith to compose a sentence of seven words, which shall be the same whether read forwards or backwards. This he is unable to do; but an old man who had joined them not only performs the feat, but actually improvises five lines of poetry, each of which has the same extraordinary property. Of course this is Abû Zayd, and when Ḥârith discovers him, he introduces him to his friends, who invite him to spend the night with them in conversation. He pleads that his hungry children are expecting him; but assures them that if they will let him go and give them a meal he will return forthwith. They accede to this, and send a servant with him to carry his wallet. After some time the servant comes back alone, and relates that Abû Zayd had refused to return, and had dismissed him with some moral verses.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I was present at the prayer of sunset in one of the mosques of the West:—And when I had performed it with completeness and joined to it what was optional, my eye fell on a company who had set themselves down aside and had drawn apart, friends pure in friendship;—And they were taking from each other the cup of talk and rubbing the fire-staves of discussion.—And I desired to converse with them for the sake of some maxim that might be acquired, or of scholarship that might be gotten in increase;—So

I advanced to them as one who would play Ṭofayl upon them,—And said to them, "Will ye receive a comer who seeks to gather of night-talkings, and seeks not the newly-gathered of fruits; and who desires the beauties of dialogue, not the choice of the young camel's hump?" —Then they loosed their loops to me, and said, "Welcome, Welcome!"—And I had not sat longer than the flash of the blinding lightning or the sip of the timid bird, when there came upon us a wanderer; on his shoulder was a wallet;—And he greeted us with the two words, and he greeted the mosque with the two salutations;—And he said, "O ye men of understanding and choice excellence!—Know ye not that the most precious of offerings is the relieving of sorrows, and the firmest cord of salvation is the imparting to those who have need?—Now, by Him who hath set me down in your precinct, and destined to me the asking alms of you, truly I am the stray of a distant abode, the messenger of lank-bellied children;—And is there in the company any that will cool down for us the heat of hunger?"— Then they said to him, "O stranger, thou hast come after the even-tide, and there remained over only the leavings of our supper.—But if thou art content with these thou wilt find among us none to forbid thee."—He said, "Surely the brother of afflictions, he is content with the scraps of tables and the shakings of provision bags."—Then each of them bade his servant to victual him with what he had.—And the kindness pleased him and he thanked for it, and took seat and watched what was brought him.—And we, we returned to mooting the beauties of scholarship and its choice points, and drawing forth its rill from its founts,—Until we engaged in the

subject of language which does not become absurd by being reversed, as the phrase ساكبُ كأس (the pourer out of the cup).—Then we challenged each other that we should make our thoughts yield an offspring in it, that we should originate virgin phrases in it,—On the condition that he who began should string three beads on his necklace, and that the additions should advance by degrees after him;—So that the man on his right should place four in his series, and his neighbour of the left should place seven perforce.

Said the narrator: And we were ranged to the number of the hand's fingers, and we were set together with the union of the men of the Cave.—Then to the greatness of my vexation, hastened he on my right, and said: لُم اخًا ملّ, (Blame him who wearies of thee).—And the one on his right said: كبّر رَجاءً أجر ربّك, (Make great thy hope of the recompense of thy Lord).—Said he who was next: ومَن يَرُبُّ اذا برّ يتمّ, (He who completes the kindness which he renders, gains increase.)—Said the last: سَكّتْ كُلّ مَنّ نمّ لكْ تَكِس, (Silence every one who blabs to thee, and thou wilt be wise.)—Then the turn came to me, and to string a seven-beaded thread was incumbent on me.—And my thought ceased not to mould and break, to be fertile and barren; and all the while I seek food and find none to feed me;—Until my breeze fell, and my submission was manifest.—And I said to my companions "If the Serûji were present here, he would heal this cureless malady."—They said, "If this came before Iyâs he would certainly stop in despair."—Then began we to be profuse in declaring that it was hard, and that its door was shut.—But that visitor who had come upon us glanced at us with the glance of the contemptuous; and

he was joining pearls together, and we knew it not.—And when he had noticed our ignominy, and the drying up of our pool, he said "O people! truly a great trouble is it to make the barren bring forth, or to get a cure by the sick; and 'there is One learned above all the learned.'"—Then he turned to me and said, I will take thy place, and free thee from what has fallen on thee:—Now if thou desire to speak in prose, and yet not to trip, say, addressing him who blames avarice, and is large in his reproach, لُذ بكُلِّ مُؤَمَّلٍ اذا لمّ ومَلَكَ بَذَلَ, (Take refuge with every trusty patron, who, when he has collected and possesses, gives freely).—But if thou prefer to versify, say to him whom thou esteemest:

Bestow on the needy when he comes to thee, and show regard even when a man injures thee.

Have dealings with him that is noble, but put afar from thee the base.

Withdraw from the side of the unjust, the mischievous, when he sits by thee.

When contention rouses itself put it off from thee, and cast it away when it confirms itself.

Be still, and thou shalt grow strong; for it may be that time that was perverse to thee shall aid thee.

Said Al Ḥârith: Now when he had bewitched us with his verses, and fatigued us by the remoteness of his goals—We praised him until he begged to be spared, and we gave to him until he said it was enough.—Then he gathered up his garment, and loaded on his wallet, and rose to go, reciting:

Excellent are this company, who are true of speech, princes in bounty.

They surpass mankind in far-famed virtues, they surpass them in their gifts.

I have talked with them, and found that Saḥbân in their presence would be as Bâḳil:

And I alighted among them begging, and met with a rain that poured.

I swear that if the generous are a shower they are a flood.

Then he stepped two lances' space, but returned commending himself to God from death,—And said, "O strength of him that is without kindred, treasure of him that is reft of wealth!—The glooming has now set in, and the face of the highway is veiled;—And between me and my house is the dark night and a razed out path.—And have ye a lantern that will secure me from stumbling, and make plain the tracks?"—Said Al Ḥârith: And when there was brought what was sought for, and the light of the brand disclosed men's faces,—I saw that he who hunted us was our Abû Zayd; and I said to my friends, "This is he of whom I indicated that when he speaks he hits the point, and when he is asked for rain he pours."—And they stretched towards him their necks, and they made the blacks of their eyes surround him.—And they begged him that he would pass his night in talk with them, on the condition that they should mend his poverty.—He said, "My desire is yours! Welcome to you since ye have welcomed!—Nevertheless when I came to you my children were writhing with hunger, and calling to me for a quick return.—And if they find me tardy, distraction will possess them, and my life will be no more serene.—Now suffer me to go that I may fill their emptiness, and relieve their choke; then return to you straightway, prepared for night-talking till the dawn."—So we said to one of the lads, "Follow him to his people, that he may be the quicker to come again."—And the boy set out with him, carrying his wallet under his arm, hastening

his return:—But he delayed a delay exceeding bounds; then the lad came back alone.—We said to him, "What story hast thou of the knave?"—He said: He took me along wearying ways and branching paths, until we came to a ruined hut.—Then he said, "Here is my station, the nest of my chicks."—And he bade open to him the door, and he pulled away from me his wallet, and said, "By my life! thou hast lightened a load off me, and deserved fair treatment from me.—Now here is a counsel for thee which is among the most precious of counsels, the seed-plots of advantages;" then he recited:

When thou hast got the plucking of the palm, defer it not to the coming year:

And if thou lightest on a treading-floor, fill thy crop with the ears that are there;

And stay not when thou hast picked them up, lest thou stick in the net of the snarer;

And go not far in when thou swimmest, for safety is on the bank.

Accost with "Give now," and answer with "Bye and bye;" and sell what is postponed from thee for what comes at once.

And exceed not upon a friend in thy visiting, for no one was ever wearied of save the clinging guest.

Then he said, "Treasure these lines in thy heart, and follow them in thy conduct.—And now hasten to thy fellows in the keeping of thy Lord;—And when thou hast reached them, bring them my greeting, and rehearse to them my commandment.—And say to them from me that full sure night-watching spent in tales is among the greatest of harms; and that I fail not to care for myself, nor will bring dryness into my head by vigils."—Said the narrator: Now when the argument of his poem had put us in view of his cunning and fraud, we upbraided each other for leaving him, and for deceiving ourselves with his lie.—Then we separated with frowning faces and a losing bargain.

THE SEVENTEENTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "THE REVERSED."

This Assembly closely resembles the last; the difference between them being that, whereas the feat accomplished in the last consisted in producing sentences or lines of poetry, the letters of which should be the same whether read forward or backward, the peculiarity of the present composition is that the words themselves being reversed produce a perfect sense. The Assembly, in other respects, shows no feature that requires notice.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: In one of the places whither my journeying cast me, to whose fairness my eye was lifted up, I beheld some youths, on whom was the mark of understanding, and the beauty of the stars of the dark.—And they were in a debate that was strong of blast, and a contention that exceeded in its heat.—Then was I roused to make towards them by the love of disputation, and by deeming the fruits of discussion to be sweet.—And when I had joined myself to their company, and strung myself on their thread, they said, "Art thou one who will prove himself in the strife and cast in his bucket among the buckets?"—I said, "Nay, I am but of the lookers on at war, not of the sons of the stab and the stroke."—Then they broke off from arguing with me, and gave themselves to putting forth riddles.—And there was in the midst of their ring, and in the circlet of their company, an old man whom cares had made lean, whom the hot wind had scorched;—So that he had come to be thinner than a reed, dryer than the shears.—And yet was he uttering wonders whenever he answered, and causing Saḥbân

to be forgotten as often as he expounded.—And I admired the judgment he was gifted with, and his surpassing that assemblage.—And he ceased not to make clear every puzzle, and to lay low all he aimed at, until the quivers were empty, and the asking and the answering were exhausted.—Now when he saw that the company had consumed their store, and were forced to fasting, he hinted at a colloquy, and asked leave for an argument.—They said, "Excellent, but who will be our surety for it?"—He said, "Do ye know a composition whose earth is its heaven, and whose morn is its even; which is woven on two beams, and shows with two colours, and prays towards two points, and goes forth with two faces?—If it rises out from its east excellent is its splendour, and if it mounts from its west, then Oh its marvel!"

Said Al Ḥârith: Then it was as though the company were struck with speechlessness, or the word "Silence" were incumbent upon them.—And no man said word, and the tongue of none uttered aught;—But when he saw them dumb as cattle, and speechless as statues, he said to them, "I have now conceded to you the term of grace, and made slack to you the tether of delay:—And here is the camp of gathering, the station of decision.—Now if your minds yield freely I will praise, but if your fire-staves be barren I will rub the spark."—They said to him, "By Allah, there is no swimming for us in the deep of this sea, no wandering on its shore; so give rest to our thoughts from travail, and make grateful thy gift by readiness.—And take us as brethren who will leap when thou leapest, and will recompense when thou seekest recompensing."—And he looked down a

space; then he said, I hear you and obey.—Take now this dictation from me and hand it down of me:

Man is the creature of kindness; and the perfecting of a benefit is the deed of the liberal; and the disposition of the generous is a treasure of praise; and the gain of thanks is a gathering of happiness; and the index of generosity is the light of cheerfulness; and the practice of courtesy leads of needs to affection; and the bond of friendship demands sincere counsel; and truth of narrative is the ornament of the tongue; and eloquence in speech is witchcraft to hearts; and the net of desire is the bane of souls; and impatience of disposition is a dishonour to mortals; and evil desire consists not with self-restraint; and the clinging to prudence is the leading-cord of safety; and to seek occasions for blaming is the worst of faults; and the dwelling upon failings overthrows friendships; and sincerity of purpose is the cream of a gift; and ungrudgingness in conferring is the price due to asking; and the undertaking of labours lays the way for recompence; and faith in God's protection makes it easy to bestow; and the excellence of the prince is largeness of breast; and the ornament of rulers is hatred of defamers; and the reward of praiseworthy deeds is a bestowing of gifts; and the dowry of conciliation is the obtaining of requests; and the cause of error is extravagance of aim; and to overstep bounds blunts vigour; and transgression of politeness nullifies services; and the forgetting of rights provokes resistance; and to shun doubtful deeds raises men's rank; and elevation of dignities is by rushing into dangers; and the exalting of positions is by the favour of Providence;

and loftiness in actions is through the limiting of desires; and the lengthening of thought makes precision of judgment; and the crown of princeliness is the refinement of courtliness; and by contentiousness is lost what is sought for; and in perils is shown the difference among men; and in the superiority of plans lies the distinction of men's values; and by the exaggeration of the envoy policy is weakened; and through laxness of powers do terrors appear; and by the task of patience is the fruit of victory; and the merit to be praiseworthy is in proportion to diligence; and to repay regard is necessary to consideration; and affection in servants is shown in visiting their masters; and the adornment of manliness is the guarding of trusts; and the proving of brethren is in their lightening one's griefs; and the repulse of enemies is by defence on the part of friends; and the testing of the intelligent is by associating them with the ignorant; and the looking to consequences gives security from fatalities; and the keeping from baseness spreads reputation; and the vice of boorishness consists not with excellence; and the essence of the noble is the guarding of secrets.

Then he said: These are two hundred words comprising culture and admonition.—If one move them in this direction, there is no debate, no contention; but if one desire the reversing of their mould, and the turning of them backwards, let him say, "Secrets are trusted to the noble; and the nature of excellence consists not with boorishness; and foulness of reputation spreads disgrace;"—And so on this track let him trail them and not fear error in them, until there shall come the close of their couplets and the last of their

pearls, namely, "and to perfect kindness is a good deed of man."

Said the narrator: Now when he had uttered his unique address, and his elegancy that was perfect of meaning, we knew how much composition may be diverse in merit, and that excellence is in the hand of God; He gives it to whom he will.—Then clung each of us to his skirt, each cut off for him a portion from what he possessed.—But he declined to receive mine, and said, "I do not take forfeit of my pupils."—I said, "Be Abû Zayd, even with all this embrowning of thy figure and this failure of the water of thy cheek."—He said, "I am he, even with all my leanness and withering, and the squalor of my drought."—Then I took to chiding him for this gadding east and west.—But he declared the Power of God and our return to Him; then he indited with an aching heart:

Time hath drawn his sword upon me to fright me, and hath sharpened his blade;

And hath stolen away from mine eyelid its slumber, like an adversary; and hath made its tear flow down;

And caused me to roam the world; to go about its east, to traverse its west:

And day after day there is for me in each valley but a single rising and setting.

And so the exile's figure is changed and his destination is afar.

Then he went away trailing his gait and swinging his arms;—And we were divided between turning to gaze on him and hastening after him.—Then we delayed not to loose our loops, and we went asunder like the bands of Saba.

The following is Abû Zayd's composition read backwards: Secrets are trusted to the noble; and the

nature of excellence consists not with boorishness; and foulness of reputation spreads disgrace; and the guarding against fatalities secures from ill consequences; and the discerning of the foolish is by associating them with the intelligent; and the proving of friends is in the repelling of enemies; and the driving away of sorrows is by the cheering of brethren; and the proof of religious beliefs is in the observance of virtue; and the grace of subjects is the visiting their masters; and sincerity of regard consists in the repaying of consideration; and the necessity of exertion is in proportion to reputation; and the meriting of success is the fruit of patience; and in the duress of terrors is strength shown; and by looseness of policy the envoy is weakened; and through increase of rank do purposes differ; and according to the eminence of men is the magnitude of their perils; and in poverty contention is useless; and with courtliness comes the refinement of rule; and the first thing in knowledge is clearness of thought; and to defer men's hopes is a failure in duties; and loftiness of authority is by the favour of Providence; and exaltation in dignities is by rushing into dangers; and the raising of rank raises distrusts; and the shunning of contumacy produces regard for rights; and forgetfulness of services destroys courtesy; and to overstep bounds blunts vigour; and to go beyond the mark is an excess of error; and the obtaining of requests is by the interceding of conciliation; and the dowry of givers is the spreading of their praiseworthy deeds; and the reward of administrators is the hatred of rulers; and the ornament of the prince is largeness of breast; and the virtue of bestowing brings with it God's protection; and faith in recompense

makes labours easy; and the hatefulness of begging is the price paid for conferring; and ungrudgingness in a gift is the cream of intention; and sincerity in affection makes nought of failings; and the dwelling upon men's vices is the worst of faults; and the seeking after safety is the leading-cord of prudence; and the clinging to self-restraint keeps from desire; and evil of disposition is the dishonour of mortals; and the weariness of souls is the bane of love; and the witchcraft of speech is a net to hearts; and the eloquence of the tongue is the grace of narrative; and truthfulness of advice demands friendship; and the bond of affection leads of needs to courtesy; and the habit of cheerfulness is an earnest of nobility; and the index of happiness is the gathering of thanks; and a gain of praise is the treasure of the generous; and the nature of the liberal is the doing of goodness; and the perfecting of kindness is a good deed of man.

THE EIGHTEENTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF SINJÂR."

In this Assembly Abû Zayd is represented as gaining a splendid present by the narrative of an alleged misfortune. We are left in doubt whether his story be true or only one of his usual artifices to obtain the bounty of his friends. In a journey from Damascus to Bagdad, the caravan, in which are Ḥârith and Abû Zayd, halts at Sinjâr, a city of the Diyâr Rabî'ah, which lies on the northern route between Syria and Irak. There a merchant was giving a wedding feast, to which, according to the hospitable custom of the East, all classes were invited. After the more substantial viands have been consumed, a glass vase of sweetmeats is produced, at the sight of which Abû Zayd starts up and quits the circle of guests. On being asked the reason of this conduct he declares that he is bound by an oath not

to remain in the vicinity of anything that is transparent and *betrays* what is inside it. The company unwillingly send away the sweetmeats, and Abû Zayd then tells his story, which is that, being possessed of a beautiful and accomplished slave girl, he had revealed the secret to a false friend, who had betrayed it to the Governor. This officer being desirous to obtain such a paragon as a present to his Prince, had taken the girl from him by force; on which Abû Zayd had vowed that he would never remain in company with any thing that could not keep a secret: and as glass has this defect he must decline to sit opposite to a glass vase. The host respects this somewhat fanciful scruple, and in the end orders sweetmeats to be brought in silver vases, and presents Abû Zayd, not only with the contents of the vessels, but the vessels themselves. Though the conceit on which this composition is founded is puerile enough, the Assembly is one of the most poetical in Ḥarîri's work, and a choice specimen of his rich and elaborate diction. Whatever merits it may possess are, however, diminished by the circumstance that it is a close imitation, and in parts almost a literal copy, of one by Al Hamadâni.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I was once on the return journey from Damascus, on my way to the City of Peace,—With travellers of the Benû Nomayr, a company of wealth and worth.—And with us was Abû Zayd, of Serûj, he that is an enchainment to the hasty, and a beguiling to the bereaved, the wonder of the time, the pointed at with the finger for his eloquence.—Now our halting at Sinjâr fell on a time when one of the merchants there was making a marriage feast:—And he bade to his banquet the whole commonalty, both of settled land and of desert; so that his bidding extended to the caravan, and he comprised in it both the important and those of no account.—Now when we had responded to his bidder, and arrived at his hall, he set before us viands of one hand and two, whatever is sweet in the mouth or fair to the eye.—And after this he brought forth a vase, which was as though it had been congealed

of air, or condensed of sunbeam motes, or moulded of the light of the open plain, or peeled from the white pearl: —And it had been furnished with assortments of comfits, and affused with a pervading perfume, and there had been poured into it a draught from Tesnîm, and it disclosed a fair aspect, and the fragrance of a gentle breeze.—Now when our appetites were kindled at its presence, and our palates were eager for the trial of it; and it was imminent that the squadrons should be sent forth against its train, and that we should cry at the spoiling of it, Revenge!—Lo Abû Zayd sprang up like a madman, and sundered from it as far as the lizard is sundered from the fish.—Then we sought of him that he should return, and not be as was Ḳodâr among Thamûd.—But he said, "By Him who raises the dead from their sepulchres, I will not return except the vase be taken away.—So we found no escape from humouring him, and acquitting him of his vow.—And we bade carry it away, and our minds were carried after it and our tears flowed concerning it.—And when he had returned to his seat, and was free from guilt, we asked him wherefore he rose, and for what reason he bade take away the vase.—He said, "Because that glass is a betrayer; and for years I have had an oath that the same place should not hold me and one who betrays."—We said to him, "What is the cause of thy strict oath and thy binding vow?"—He said: I had a neighbour whose tongue cajoled, while his heart was a scorpion; whose speech was a honeycomb to refresh, while his hidden thought was a concentred venom:—And through his living near me I was led to converse with him, and by his false smiling I was deluded into consorting with

him:—And the fairness of his seeming infatuated me to companying with him, and the guile of his character drew me on to intimacy with him.—And I associated with him in the thought that he would be to me as a most close neighbour; but it was made manifest that he was a swooping eagle:—And I was familiar with him in the belief that he was a familiar friend, but he showed that he was a treacherous serpent.—And I ate my salt with him, and knew not that at the testing he would be of those whose loss is rejoiced at:—And I drank my wine with him, and understood not that on trial he would be of those whose departure is a delight.

Now in my house was a maiden to whom no rival could be found in perfection.—If she unveiled, the two lights of heaven were shamed, and each heart was burned with the fires of love.—If she smiled, she made the beads of silver to be despised, and pearls would be sold for what is worthless.—If she gazed, she roused love-fancies; she realized the witchcraft of Babylon.—If she spoke, she enchained the heart of the wise, and called down the wild goats from the crags.—If she read the Koran, she would heal the heart-sick, she would give life to one buried alive; so that thou wouldest think her gifted with the pipes of David.—If she sang, Ma'bad would become as a slave to her, and to Isaac it would be said, "Away! begone!"—If she piped, Zonâm would appear an impostor beside her; although he was a leader in his generation, one confident in his charming.—If she danced, she dislodged the turbans from men's heads; she would make thee forget the dance of the bubbles in the cups.—And possessed of her I despised the red camels; and with the enjoyment of her I

adorned the neck of my prosperity.—And I veiled her face from the sun and moon; I excluded the mention of her from the paths of my night-talk;—Yet withal was I fearful lest a breeze by night might bear her fragrance, or a Saṭîḥ divine of her, or the flashing lightning betray her.—And it came to pass, through the decay of my minished fortune, and the malignness of my unlucky star, that the heat of wine caused me to describe her to my blabbing neighbour.—Then understanding returned after the arrow had been shot, and I felt trouble and vexation, knowing that the thing was lost which was committed to such a sieve.—But yet I stipulated with him to keep close what I had uttered, and to guard my secret even though I should anger him.—And he declared that he treasured secrets as the miser treasures the denar; and that he would not rend veils of confidence even were he exposed to be cast into fire.

But not more than a day or two had passed when it occurred to the ruler of that town, and its Governor having authority,—That he would repair to the court of his Prince to make a new display of his horsemen, and pray a rain from the cloud of his bounty;—And he wished for a present to take with him, such as should accord with the Prince's desire; that he might offer it in the course of his interview.—Whereon he began to be liberal in rewards to his scouts, and to heighten the inducements to whoso should possess him of his wish.—Then stooped that treacherous neighbour his flight to the largess, and, putting on the breast-plate of infamy, rebelled against the blame of the blamer.—And he came to the Governor, stretching his ears, and published what I had told him as a secret.—And I had no alarm till his de-

pendants rushed in to me and his servants swarmed upon me, urging me to prefer him with my peerless pearl, on the condition that I should dictate to him her price.—Then sorrow overwhelmed me as the sea overwhelmed Pharaoh and his host.—And I ceased not to defend her, but defence availed not; and to intercede with him, but intercession profited not.—And as often as he saw in me an increase of evasion and the desire of escape, he shouted, he burned with rage, he gnashed upon me with his teeth.—But yet my soul consented not to part from its full moon, nor that I should tear the heart from my breast.—But when threatening turned to assault, and invective to beating, the fear of death led me to barter the black of my eye for the yellow of coin; but the informer gained nought but guilt and ignominy.—And since then I have had a vow to God Most High that I would never again keep in presence of a betrayer.—Now glass is distinguished by this base quality; nay, its name has been made a proverb for treachery;—So that the tenour of my oath extends to it, and that is the reason that my hand stretches not forth to it.

Now, since I have explained, blame me not that ye have been hindered in the vintage of the cates;

For my excuse in what I have done is plain; and I will repair the rent I have made by my resources, old or new;

So that the pleasantry that I will supply you with shall be more delicious than sweetmeats in the judgment of all the intelligent.

Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Then we accepted his excusing, and kissed his cheek,—And said to him, "Long since treachery vexed the Best of Mankind, so that there was declared concerning the woman that carried firewood that which was declared."—After this

we asked him of the behaviour of this tell-tale neighbour, this unregardful intimate.—After he had feathered against him the arrow of delation, and cut the cord of observance,—He said, He took to submission and humiliation, and to interceding with me by people of degree. —But I had straitly charged myself that my familiarity should not seek a return to him until my yesterday should return to me.—And he gained nothing from me but refusal and persistence in aversion; yet was he not disheartened by repulse, nor shamed from his impudence of face; but persevered in overtures and was urgent in requests;—And nought freed me from his annoying and made hopeless to him the gaining of his desire, save some verses in which breathed the vengeful breast and the wounded spirit.—And these proved a driving forth to his devil, an imprisoning of him in his dwelling.—And on their publication he made an irrevocable divorce with joy, and cried, Alas! Perdition!—And despaired of the resurrection of my buried friendship as the infidels despair of the tenants of the tombs.—Then we conjured him to recite them, and give us to smell their fragrance. —He said, "Be it so: man is made up of impatience." —So he recited, and no bashfulness hindered him, no timidity restrained him:

There was a companion to whom I gave the pure milk of my love's truth when I fancied him true and a friend;

But to whom I showed the estrangement of him that hates when I found him to be foul as the matter of a sore or as tepid water.

I fancied him, before he was tried, a familiar and dutiful; but he has shown himself a churl, one to be censured:

I chose him as one to converse with me, but my heart is now wounded by his wronging;

I thought him to be a helper and compassionate, but I have discovered him to be an accursed one, a devil to be driven away with

I looked upon him as one devoted to me, but my testing of him has disclosed him as a fiend perverse and vile;

And I judged that he would blow a gentle breeze, but he would blow nought but a simoom.

From his serpent-bite which baffled the enchanter I lay wounded: but he had no hurt from me.

On the morning of our separation his condition was erect, but my body was sick;

He was not pleasant and abundant to me; nay, by his evil-doing he was terrible to me, and an adversary.

I said, when I had made trial of him, "Would that he existed not, that he had not been a companion to me."

By his betrayal he made hateful the morning to my heart, since the morning is found to be a betrayer;

And he has brought me to the love of the night, since the black of darkness is a watcher that conceals;

And enough of guilt and blame has the informer in his work, even though he speak the truth.

Said Al Ḥârith: Now when the master of the house heard his verse and his cadence, and admired his encomium and his satire,—He set him on the couch of his respect, and gave him the first place on his cushion of honour;—Then he bade bring ten dishes of silver, on which were sweetmeats of candy and honey,—And said to him, "The people of the Fire are not as the people of the Garden; nor is it lawful that the innocent should be made as the suspected.—Now these vessels take rank among the sinless in the keeping of secrets; so show them not aversion, nor count Hûd with 'Âd."—Then he bade his servant carry them to his lodging that he might do with them as he would.—And Abû Zayd turned to us and said, "Recite the Chapter of Victory, and be gladsome at the healing of your wound;—For now God hath repaired your bereavement and permitted your meal, and gathered you together to sweetmeats; and it may be that ye mislike a thing, and yet it is your

good."—And when he was thinking of departure he inclined to beg the dishes as a present,—And said to the entertainer, "Truly it is among the marks of good breeding that he who gives aught should give the vessel that holds it."—Said the host, "Both of them and the boy; so speak no more, but rise in peace."—And he leaped up to the reply, and thanked the host as the meadow thanks the rain-cloud.—Then did Abû Zayd lead us to his tent and give us to dispose of his sweet-meats, and began to pass round the dishes, and to divide their contents among the company;—And he said: I know not whether I should complain of that betrayer or thank him; whether I should forget his act or remember it.—For though he was aggressive in his wrong and tinseled his treacherous tale, yet from his cloud did this plenteous rain pour down, and from his sword did this spoil come in to me.—And now it is moving in my mind that I should return to my cubs, and be content with what has come thus easily, and not weary myself nor my camels.—So I will take leave of you as one that is regardful, and commend you to the Best of Guardians.—Then he mounted his beast to return on his track, to bend his course to his people.—And when his strong camel coursed along and his sociableness quitted us, he left us as an assembly whose president is gone, or a night whose moon has set.

THE NINETEENTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF NAṢÎBÎN."

In this composition Ḥarîrî displays his knowledge of the Ṭofayli jargon. Among the fancies of his age it was the custom to give to

various kinds of food names compounded with ابو and أم, such as are attached to a great number of animals and inanimate objects. As the Arabs of the desert called a bird ابو براقش, and a she-hyæna أم عامر; and as the milky way was called أمّ السماء, so the Euphuists of the polished cities of Irak called a dish of rice by one *kinyeh*, or bye-name, and a dish of meat by another. To know these seems to have been considered a mark of good breeding; and the learned author did not think them unworthy of a place in his work, as one of the characteristics of the Arabic language. In the same spirit he introduces into the 30th Assembly a number of the cant terms used by the beggars of the time, or as they were called "the people of Sâsân." The story of the Assembly is of the usual simplicity. Abû Zayd is pursuing his ordinary course of life at Naṣîbîn, in the Diyâr Rabî'ah, when he is taken with a serious illness. His friends, hearing of it, hasten to his house in alarm, but are informed that he is better and will receive them. They find him prostrate, but as talkative as ever; and after he has entertained them with his conversation for some time he tells his son, in the enigmatical language of Ṭofayl, to bring a repast for them. They partake of it, and leave him rejoicing in his recovery, and grateful for his hospitality.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: Irak was barren in a certain year through the failure of the stars that bring the rain-cloud;—And the travellers told of the tract of Naṣîbîn, and the comfort of its wealthy people.—Then I mounted a camel of Mahrah, and fixed a lance of Samhar,—And journeyed, land sending me on to land, and hill drawing me up from dale, until I reached it, worn man on worn beast.—Now when I had halted in its fertile dwelling-place, and won a portion in its pasture, I purposed that I would lay down my neck in it, and take its people for my neighbours,—Until the dried year should revive, and the spring-rain visit the land of my family.—Now, by Allah, my eye-ball had not tasted of its sleep, my night had not travailed of its day, ere I found Abû Zayd, the Serûji, roaming the quarters of Naṣîbîn, now stumbling with the crazed,

now winning with the fortunate.—And from his mouth was he scattering pearls, and he milked the milk-flow with both his hands.—Then I found that my campaign had now gathered a booty, and my single lot had become two-fold;—And I ceased not to follow his shadow wheresoever he sped, and to glean his utterance as often as he spoke,—Until there came on him a sickness whose term was prolonged, whose sharp knives bared his bone; so that it went near to rob him of the robe of life, to give up to Abû Yaḥya.—Then did I feel through the loss of his presence and the interruption of his teaching, as he feels that is put far from his desire, or the suckling at the weaning.—After this it was rumoured that his pledge was already forfeit, that the talon of death was fixed in him.—And his comrades were disturbed at the rumouring of the rumourers, and they swarmed to his courtyard, hurrying in:

Bewildered, their grief making them to reel, as if they had been sucking the old wine;

They poured forth their tears, and they rent their bosoms, and they beat their cheeks, and they wounded their heads;

And they had been willing that fate had made a peace with him, and had seized their possessions and themselves.

Said the narrator: Now I was of those who joined to his comrades and hastened to his gate.—And when we had arrived at his court-yard and assayed to scent the news of him, his boy came forth to us, his lips parted with a smile.—And we inquired concerning the Shaykh as regarded his complaints, and the truth of the strength of his disorders.—He said, "He was lately in the grasp of the sickness and the wearing of the fever; until the lingering disease wasted him, and the killing disease exhausted him.—But afterward God was gracious in

strengthening his last gasp, and he recovered from his trance.—So return on your paths and put off your disquietude;—For he is now one to go out and in, and to pledge you in wine."—Then we made much of his glad news, and urged that we might see him; and he entered announcing us, then came out permitting us:—And we found Abû Zayd a prostrate, but his tongue going freely.—Then we took seat about his bed, gazing on his lineaments.—And he turned his eye round the assemblage; then said, Look on this, the offspring of the moment:

God has saved me, thanks be to Him, from a sickness that went near to blot me out;

And has granted me recovery; though it must needs be that death will one day waste me.

Death forgets me not; yet he gives me a delay before the end of my feeding.

If it be decreed, then will no friend avail, nay, not even the guarded domain of Kolayb, to guard me from him.

Nor care I if his day be near, or if death be put off for a season.

For what boast is there in life, in which I behold afflictions, nay, they wear me out?

Said Al Ḥârith: Then we saluted him with wishes for the lengthening of his term and the withdrawal of his fear;—And invited each other to rise through fear of annoying him.—But he said, "Nay, but stay with me during the light of to-day that by your pleasantry ye may heal my sadness;—For your conversation is the food of my soul, the magnet of my friendliness."—Then we aimed at contenting him and guarded from disobeying him; and turned to discourse, gathering its cream, throwing away its froth;—Until the time of the day-sleep came on and the tongues were weary with talking.—And it was a day hot with a fervent heat, ripening the orchard.—So he said, "Surely drowsiness is now bending

down your necks and seeking your eye-corners; and he is a strenuous adversary, a suitor not to be repulsed. —So make alliance with him by a day-sleep, and pattern in this by the Traditions handed down."—Said the narrator: Then we followed what he said, and we slept and he slept; and God smote upon the ears, and poured out slumber on the eyelids,—Until we passed from the domain of Being, and by sleep were hindered from prayer.—And we waked not until the heat was now abated and the day was old.—Whereupon we washed hand and foot for the two mute prayers, and performed what loosed us of our debt.—Then we stirred for departure to the place of our camel-saddles.—But Abû Zayd turned to his cub, who was after his likeness and make, and said: I fancy that the Father of Indwelling has now lighted a coal in their stomachs;—So call for the Father of Assembling, for he is glad news for every hungry one:—And follow with the Father of Pleasantness, him who is patient at every wrong;—Then reinforce by the Father of Lovingness, the loved of every one that is wise; him that is turned about between burning and torment;—And on! with the Father of Acuteness, for excellent is he as a companion;—And ho! with the Father of Help, for there is no attendant like him;—And if thou bring on the Father of Comeliness, how comely will he make his comeliness;—And haste with the Mother of Hospitality, her who may remind thee of Chosroes;—And forget not the Mother of Strengthening, for how many are those who tell of her; —And call to the Mother of Joyfulness; then assault her, it is no crime;—And end with the Father of Dignity, the consoler of every sorrowful one;—And if

thou join with him the Father of Loftiness thou will blot out thy name from among the niggardly.—And beware of summoning the Two Rumourers before the rising of the camels of departure.—And when the company have ceased from their hand-washing, and have handled the Father of Softness,—Then carry round to them the Father of Generosity, for he is the sign of the generous.

Said Al Ḥârith: Then his son understood the delicacies of his hinting by the subtlety of his discernment.—And he went round among us with viands and perfume; until the sun gave notice of the setting.—Now when we had resolved on departure, we said to him, "Seest thou not this marvellous day, how its morn showed gloomy, but its even is brilliant?"—And he prostrated himself long in prayer; then raised his head and said:

Despair not in calamities of a gladdening that shall wipe away thy sorrows;
For how many a simoom blows, then turns to a gentle breeze and is changed!
How many a hateful cloud arises, then passes away and pours not forth!
And the smoke of the wood, fear is conceived of it, yet no blaze appears from it;
And oft sorrow rises, and straightway sets again.
So be patient when fear assails, for time is the father of wonders;
And hope from the peace of God blessings not to be reckoned.

Said Al Ḥârith: Then we noted down his excellent verses and kept giving thanks to God Most High: and we took leave of him, glad at his recovery, overwhelmed by his bounty.

THE TWENTIETH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF MAYYÂFÂRIḲÎN."

In this Assembly Abû Zayd laments the decay of his strength, and his advancing age, under the semblance of a mighty and valiant hero, to provide a shroud for whom he asks the bounty of the company.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I was making towards Mayyâfârikîn with a company of the well suited, men who disputed not in familiar talk, who knew not the taste of dissembled hatred.—And with them I was as one who quits not his abode, who travels not from his friend and neighbour;—And when we had brought to their knees the camels of journeying, and had passed from our saddles to our nests, we commanded each other to bear in mind companionship, and we forbade separation in a strange land.—And we took a chamber that we might frequent it at the two ends of day and present each other with the choice of the news.—Now while we were there on a certain day, and had strung ourselves on the thread of union,—Lo! there stood by us one with a bold tongue and a loud voice;—And he greeted with the greeting of a wizard who blows on knots; of one who hunts all, from the lion to the sheep. —Then he said:

Habeo, amici, miram narrationem, à quâ exemplum sibi sumat auditor peritus et intelligens.

Vidi in flore ætatis meæ juvenem fortissimum, cui gladii erat acies penetrantis:

In certamen irruit perinde ac si certus esset aliqud audendi, et non pertimuit.

His præliis usque eo angustias dilatavit ut id quod obstructum fuerat pateret.

Ubi provocavit adversarios nunquam rediit à pugnæ contentione sine spiculo sanguine imbuto:

Nec unquam instituit arcem oppugnare arduam, occlusam, formidabilem, timendam,

Quin clamatum sit, cùm id instituisset: Victoria à cœlo et præsidium appropinquat.

Præterea, quot noctes egit vestibus adolescentiæ tectus nitidis;

Molles puellæ et dabant ei et receperunt ab eo oscula; et ille ubique gratus fuit et jucundus.

Sed tempus non desiit fortitudinem illius et vires eripere;

Donec anni ita eum afflixerint ut ab illo conjunctissimi amici decederent.

Debilis fuit magus, nec morbum ejus sanare potuit, et tumultuatus fuit medicus:

Ita ut discesserit à candidis puellis, et discesserint ab eo, postea quam et ab eis responsum accepisset, eisque respondisset.

Evasitque incurvus formâ, nam quicunque vivit miseriis senectutis est obnoxius.

Ecce illum hodiè veste funebri involutum! Et quis mortui peregrini curat reliquias.[1]

Then he broke openly into wailing, and wept with the weeping of the lover over his beloved.—And when his tear was stanched and his passion cooled, he said, O ye, who are as a pasture to the forage-scouts, an example to the generous; by Allah, I have not spoken with falsehood, I have not told you save from beholding.—Now if there were a thong to my staff, or a thin shower to my cloud, I would myself have done that to which I call you; I would not stand as one who directs to it.—But how can there be flying without a wing, or is it a crime on one that he is poor?

Said the narrator: Then began the company to consult of what they should advise, and to whisper of what they should do;—And he suspected that they were in purpose to dismiss him with refusal, or to importune him

[1] The above translation is that of Sir William Jones, with some slight alterations.

for proof.—And it escaped him to say, O mirages of the plain, white shingle of the hollow! What is this taking of thought which shame revolts at?—It is as though ye were tasked with a heavy labour, not with a rag; or had been asked the gift of a province, not of a mantle; or had been urged to the clothing of the Ka'beh, not to the shrouding of a corpse.—Fie on him whose rock is not moist, whose gravel oozes not!

Now when the company had perceived his glibness and the saltness of his savour, each one made him whole by a gift, and bore with his light rain through fear of his flood.—Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Now this beggar was standing behind me, hidden by my back from my eye.—But when the company had contented him by their out-pouring, and it was incumbent on me to take example by them, I drew the ring from my little finger and turned to him my gaze,—And lo! he was our Shaykh, the Serûji, without deception, without dispute.—Then I was sure it was a lying tale he had lied, and a net that he had laid.—But not the less did I fold his cloth over its rent and keep his splayness of tooth from inspection,—And threw him the ring, and said, "Use it for the cost of the mourning assembly."—He said, "Well done! how burns thy flame! how noble is thy deed!"—Then he went off, running straight forward and trotting his trot as of old.—But I longed for a knowledge of his dead man, and to examine his pretence to pious duty;—So I struck my leg and kindled the ardour of my running, until I reached him a bow-shot off, and beheld him clearly in an empty place.—Then I caught him by the joining of his sleeves and stopped him from the career of his

race-course,—And said to him, "By Allah, thou hast no refuge from me, and no escape, until thou show me thy shrouded corpse.—Whereupon he pointed to himself; and I said, "God fight against thee; how playful art thou in craft, how wily after the grist!"—Then I returned to my companions as returns the scout who lies not to his people, who embellishes not his speech.—And I told them what I had seen; I disguised not, nor did I dissemble.—And they burst into laughter at the matter, and cursed that dead man.

THE TWENTY-FIRST ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF RAYY."

Al Ḥârith, being at Rayy, in Persia, finds the people flocking to hear a preacher of great eloquence and sanctity, and following them to the place of assembling, listens to a discourse from an aged man in ecclesiastical costume. When the sermon is over, a suppliant, who cannot prevail on the Governor to listen to his complaint against an official who had wronged him, calls upon the preacher to aid him by his admonitions, on which the preacher at once indites another discourse in reproof of the Governor. The latter is moved to repentance, hastens to do justice, rewards the preacher, and solicits acquaintance with him. The preacher, who is no other than Abû Zayd, goes off rejoicing in the success of his day's work, having previously given Ḥârith some moral counsel.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: Ever since I perfected my forethought and knew right from wrong, I gave care to incline to admonishings and eschew angering words,—That I might be adorned with graces of disposition, and be free from what brands with shamelessness;—And I ceased not to keep myself to this discipline, and to allay by it the coals of wrath,

until habituation in it became nature, and application to it a desire willingly obeyed.—Now when I descended at Rayy (and I had now loosed the loops of error, and knew good from evil), I saw there one morning crowd on the track of crowd;—And they were spreading with the spread of locusts, and running with the running of steeds,—And describing one to another a preacher to whom they were tending, and they set Ibn Sam'ûn below him.—Then it hindered me not from hearkening to the preachings, and making trial of the preacher, that I must endure the clamorous and bear the pushing;—So I followed as follow the obedient, and slipped into the thread of the throng,—Until we came to a meeting-place, which had united the ruler and the ruled, and gathered the eminent and the obscure;—And in the midst of its halo, and among its full moons, was an old man, bowed and with a breast-hunch, and he wore the cap and the cloak;—And he was breaking forth into a sermon to heal breasts and to soften rocks; and I heard him say, and men's minds were charmed by it:

Son of man, how thou cleavest to that which deceives thee, and clingest to that which harms thee!—How thou art given to that which seduces thee; how thou art gladdened at him who flatters thee!—Thou art troubled about that which wearies thee, but art careless of that which concerns thee.—Thou drawest wide the bow of thy transgression; thou robest thyself with covetousness which will destroy thee!—Thou art not content with what is enough; thou abstainest not from the forbidden!—Thou hearkenest not to admonishings; thou art not deterred by threatening!—It is thy habit

to veer with desires; thou stumblest with the stumbling of the purblind beast!—It is thy care to labour in making gain, and to gather an inheritance for thine heirs! —It pleases thee to increase what belongs to thee, but thou rememberest not what is before thee!—Thou art ever intent on thy two caves; thou carest not whether the account shall be in thy favour or against thee!— Dost thou think that thou shalt be left at large, or that thou shalt not be reckoned with to-morrow?—Or dost thou count that Death will take bribes; that he will distinguish between the lion and the fawn?—No, by Allah, nor wealth nor children shall ward off death; and nought profits the people of the tombs save the accepted work.—Then blessing to him who hears and retains and makes good what he claims; and withholds his soul from desire, and knows that he who turns from evil is a gainer;—And that man shall have nought save his own work; and that this work surely it shall be shown.—Then he recited as one who is fearful, but with a high-pitched voice:

By thy life! mansions and wealth will not avail when the rich man dwells in the ground and abides in it;

So be liberal with thy wealth in things pleasing to God, content with what thou gainest of His hire and reward;

And anticipate by it the change of Time, for he seizes with his crooked talon and his tooth;

And trust not treacherous fortune and its deceit, for how many a lowly one has it marred, how many a noble!

But resist the desire of the soul, which no erring one ever obeyed but he fell from his high places.

And keep to the fear of God, and the dread of Him, that thou mayest escape from his punishment which is to be feared.

Neglect not to call to mind thy sin, but weep for it with tears that shall be like the rain-flood at its pouring;

And figure to thy mind Death and his stroke, and the terror of his meeting, and the taste of his wormwood cup!

For the end of the dwelling of the living is a pit, to which he shall descend, brought down from his towers.

Then well-done! the servant whom the evil of his deed grieves, and who shows amendment before the shutting of his gate.

Said Al Hârith: Then the assembly remained amid tears that they shed, and repentance that they showed; until the sun declined, and the day's duties pressed upon us.—Now when the voices were low, and silence had gathered, and the tears and the preachings had gone to rest,—One crying for help cried to the Prince who was present, and began to wail to him of his tyrannous agent.—But the Prince leaned to the adversary, and was careless of discovering his wrong.—And when the suppliant despaired of redress from him, he called up the preacher to admonish him;—Who rose as rises the prompt, and recited, referring to the Prince:

Wonderful! a man hoping to attain to rule; and then when he attains to his desire he wrongs;

He weaves warp and woof in tyrannies; now lapping at their well, now bidding others to lap.

Nor cares he, when he is following his desires in them, whether he maintains his religion or destroys it:

Oh woe to him! if he knew well that there is no state but changes, surely he would not transgress;

Or if he saw clearly what is the repentance of him who inclines his hearing to the lie of informers, he would not incline it.

But obey thou him in whose hand is the leading-cord; cast down thine eye if he neglect observance or speak vainly:

And graze on bitter pasture when he calls thee to the grazing on it, and water at the salt well when he forbids thee the sweet.

And bear his injury even though its touch afflicts thee, and pours out the flow of thy tears, nay exhausts it;

For fortune shall give thee the laugh of him when it departs from him, and kindles for the ambush against him the fire of war.

And it shall bring down on him exultation, when he appears vacant of his office, emptied of it;

And thou shalt be pitiful to him when his cheek lies soiled on the dust of shame.

This is his fate: and then surely he shall one day stand in the place where even the master of eloquence shall be found a lisper:

And he shall be gathered to judgment viler than the toad-stool of the plain; he shall be reckoned with for his shortcoming and excess:

And he shall be chastised for that which he has committed, and for him whom he has chosen; he shall be demanded of for what he sipped and what he supped.

And he shall be reckoned exactly with concerning small things, as he was wont to do with mankind, but more thoroughly.

So that he shall bite his hand at his governing, and wish that he had not sought from it what he sought.

Then he said: O thou who art belted with authority, and trained to rule!—Put away wantonness at thy dominion, and vain trusting in thy might:—For dominion is a breeze that changes and power is a lightning that deceives.—And truly the happiest of rulers is he whose people are happy in him, and the most wretched in both worlds is he whose ruling is ill.—Then be thou not as one who neglects the life to come and disregards it, who loves the fleeting life and seeks it, who wrongs the people and afflicts them, and who, when he bears rule, walks in the earth to do violence in it.—For, by Allah, the Judge shall not be unregarding; thou shalt not be left at large, O man: but the balance shall be set for thee, and as thou rewardest thou shalt be rewarded.—Said Al Ḥârith: Then the Governor was sullen at what he heard, and his colour changed and changed:—And he began to groan concerning his rule, and to follow sigh with sigh.—Then he attended to the complainer, and rid him of his complaint, and to him that was complained of, and rebuked him.—And he was courteous to the preacher, and gave him gifts, and urged him to visit him.—And the wronged man departed victorious, and the wronger checked.—Then the preacher went forth swag-

gering among his comrades, glorying in the success of his bargain.—But I followed him up, and stepped crouching, and showed him a sharp glance.—And when he discerned what I hid from him, and was aware of the turning of my face to him, he said, "The better of two guides is he who leads aright."—Then he came near me, and recited:

I am he whom thou knowest, Ḥârith,
The talker with kings, the wit, the intimate.
I charm as charm not the triple-twisted strings,
At times a brother of earnest, at times a jester.
Events have not changed me since I met thee,
Nor has vexing calamity peeled my branch;
Nor has any splitting edge cloven my tooth;
But my claw is fixed in every prey:
On each herd that roams my wolf is ravaging;
So that it is as though I were the heir of all mankind,
Their Shem, their Ham, and their Japhet.

Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Then I said, "By Allah, now thou art surely Abû Zayd; yet thou hast been godly beyond 'Amr Ibn 'Obayd."—Then he was cheerful with the cheerfulness of the hospitable when he is visited, and said: Listen, my brother:

Keep to truth, although it scorch thee with the fire of threatening:
And seek to please God; for the most foolish of mankind is he who angers the master and pleases the slave.

Then he took leave of his fellows and departed, trailing his sleeves.—And we searched for him afterwards in Rayy, and sought to get news of him by the rolls of folding.—But there was none of us who knew of his abode, or could learn what locust had gone off with him.

THE TWENTY-SECOND ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF THE EUPHRATES."

Al Ḥârith, accompanied by some official writers, is in a boat on the Euphrates; the party being engaged in an inspection of the land for the purpose of fixing the taxation. They meet with a person in shabby garb, whom they treat with much lack of courtesy; until the conversation falling on the comparative merits of secretaries and accountants, the stranger, who is Abû Zayd, shows his eloquence by a rhetorical address on the subject. They then seek to conciliate him; but he quits them in anger, after reciting some verses on the folly and injustice of judging by appearances. This difficult Assembly exhibits a species of composition much in favour among the Arabs, in which the poet or orator first praises and then blames, or first exalts the one of two rivals and then the other. Compare the Third Assembly, in which a gold denar is thus treated; and the addresses of Sheddâd and Sahil ibn Hârûn, on gold and glass, Ar. Prov. II. p. 780. The speech of Abû Zayd on the two orders of scribes is, throughout, an elaborate display of paronomasia.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I betook myself, during a time of quiet, to the water-lands of the Euphrates;—And there I met with scribes, more excellent than the sons of Al Furât, more pleasant in manners than the sweet waters.—And I joined myself to them for their culture, not for their gold, and I companied with them for their scholarship, not for their banquets.—And among them I sat with equals of Al Ḳa'ḳâ', son of Showr, and with them I attained to plenty after want.—Until they made me sharer in food and dwelling, and set me above themselves, as the finger-top is above the finger:—And they took me as the son of their intimacy in time of office and of leisure, and the treasurer of their secret in earnest and jest.—Now it happened on a certain time that they were called to visit in their

order the corn lands of the villages:—Then they chose of the lofty-sailed boats one black, of unmixed hue:—Thou wouldst think it immovable, yet it fleeted as fleet the clouds and glided on the deep as a serpent.—Then they called me to consenting, and invited me to companying.—And when we had mounted our sable beast, and set ourselves in our cushion-saddle that moved on the water,—We found there an old man, on whom was a thread-bare coat and a worn turban.—Then the company loathed his presence, and found fault with whoever had brought him; and would have purposed to put him forth of the ship, but that their calmness returned to them.—And when he spied that we deemed his shadow to be heavy, and his shower cold, he assayed to converse, but was silenced, and he praised God after sneezing, but no one blessed him.—Then was he speechless, looking at the pass he had reached, and waiting for the help which comes to the wronged.—And we, we roamed through the bye-paths of the serious and the gay;—Until there occurred a mention of the two kinds of official writing, and their excellence, and a distinguishing of the more excellent.—And one said that the scribes of Composition were the noblest of scribes, while another leaned to the preferring of Accountants:—And the arguing grew sharp, and the dispute grew long.—Until, when there remained no longer an arena for the contention, or a field for the debate,—Said the old man: My friends, ye have made much clamour, and adduced the true and the mistaken.—But the clear decision rests with me, so be content with my coin, and consult no one after me.—Know that the art of Composition is the more lofty, though the art of Account may be the more useful.

—The pen of correspondence is a choice orator, but the pen of account-keeping picks up phrases carelessly:—And the fablings of eloquence are copied to be studied, but the ledgers of accounts are soon blotted out and razed.—And the Composer is the Johayneh for information, and the post-bag of secrets, and the confidant of the mighty, and great among guests.—And his pen is the tongue of sovereignty, and the knight of the skirmish; a Loḳmân of wisdom, and the interpreter of purpose: it carries glad news, and it warns, it is the intercessor and the envoy.—By it fortresses are won, and foes are vanquished, and the rebel is made obedient, and the distant is brought near;—And its master is free from suits, secure from the malice of accusers, praised in the assemblies, not exposed to the drawing up of registers.

Now when, in his judgment, he had arrived at this point, he saw from the glances of the company that he had sowed love and hatred, that he had pleased a part and angered a part.—So he followed up his discourse by saying: Not but that the art of Account is based on verification, and the art of Composing is founded on fabrication.—For the pen of the Accountant holds firm, but the pen of the Composer stumbles:—And between taking tribute by the impost on transactions and the reading of the leaves of volumes, is a difference to which comparison cannot apply, into which doubt cannot enter:—For tribute fills purses, but reading empties the head; and the tax of the memorandum-book enriches the overseer, but the interpretation of rolls wearies the eye.—And then also the Accountants are the guardians of wealth, the bearers of burdens, the truthful relators, the

trustworthy envoys, the guides in doing justice and obtaining it, the sufficing witnesses in breach of contract. —And of their number is the Minister of Finance, who is the Hand of the Prince, the Pivot of the Council, the Balance of business, the overseer of the agents.—To him is the reference in peace and war; on him is the management in revenue and expenditure; by him hang evil and advantage; in his hand is the rein of giving and denying.—And were it not for the pen of Accountants the fruit of earning would perish, and fraud would endure to the Day of Judgment; the order of transactions would be loosened; the wound of wrongs would be unavenged; the neck of just-dealing would be fettered; the sword of wrong-dealing would be drawn.—Moreover, the pen of composition fables, but the pen of accounting interprets; the Accountant is a close scrutinizer; the Composer is an Abû Barâḳish; —Yet each, when he rises high, has his venom until he be met and charmed; and in what each produces there is vexing until he be visited and bribed: save those that believe and work righteousness—and how few are they!

Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Now when he had thus supplied our hearings with what was pure and good, we asked him of his lineage; but he was suspicious, and shrank from telling it; and if he had found a place of escaping he would have escaped.—Then from his secrecy was I in sorrow; but after a time I recollected him,—And I said, "Now by Him who controls the rolling heaven and the voyaging ships, surely I catch the breeze of Abû Zayd, though once I knew him lord of comeliness and vigour."—And he

smiled, laughing at my speech, and said, "I am he, though with a change in state and strength."—Whereupon I said to my companions, "This is he, after whose fashioning none can fashion, whose sprite is not to be vied with."—Then they courted his friendship, and offered him wealth; but he declined from intimacy, and leaned not to the gift.—And he said, "Since ye have hurt my honour on account of my worn garment, and cast a shadow on my soul for the threadbareness of my coat,—I will look upon you only with a heated eye; ye shall have from me only a ship's companionship.—Then he recited:

Hear, my brother, commandment from a counsellor who mingles not the purity of his counsel with deceit:

Hasten not with a decisive judgment in the praise of him whom thou hast not tried, nor in the rebuke of him;

But stay thy judgment on him until thou hast had a view of his two characters in his two conditions of content and anger;

And until his deceiving flash be distinguished from his truthful one by those who watch it, and his flood from his light rain;

And then if thou perceive what dishonours him, hide it generously; but if thou see what becomes him, publish it:

And whoso deserves to be exalted, exalt him; and whoso deserves abasement, abase him to the sewer.

Know that the pure gold in the vein of the earth is hidden until it is brought out by the digging:

And the worth of the denar, its secret appears by scratching it, and not from the beauty of the graving.

It is folly that thou shouldst magnify the ignorant by reason of the brightness of his dress or the splendour of his adorning;

Or that thou shouldst make little of the man who is refined in soul on account of the threadbareness of his garb, or the shabbiness of his furniture.

For how many an owner of two torn mantles is reverenced for his worth, and he that is striped in his garments has ill-fame through his baseness.

For when a man approaches not to infamy, then are his rags only the steps to his throne.

It hurts not the sword that its sheath be worn, nor the hawk that its nest be mean.

Then he delayed not to bid the sailors stop, and he ascended from the boat and made off.—But each of us repented in that he had been incautious towards him, and drooped his eyelid over his mote,—And we vowed that we would never slight a man for the raggedness of his garment; that we would not despise the sword while hidden in the sheath.

THE TWENTY-THIRD ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF THE PRECINCT."

In this Assembly Abû Zayd is represented as showing his skill in artificial composition. He carries his son before the Governor or criminal judge of Bagdad, and accuses him of theft, in having stolen two-thirds of a copy of verses. The boy had, he said, taken two-thirds of each of several verses, and thus made a poem of his own. The Governor asks how this can be, and bids him repeat both poems, when it appears that Abû Zayd had constructed a poem with a double rhyme, one rhyme at the end of the verse, and one at the end of the fourth foot, so that by striking off the last two feet of each verse a new poem could be formed. The boy, however, declares that he had not taken his father's verses, and that the coincidence was merely fortuitous. The Governor then, to test this, bids them repeat alternate verses on a subject which he should give them; if the boy could extemporize as well as his father, it would be evident that his defence was a just one. This serves to introduce a most elaborate set of verses, full of paronomasia on the subject of a cruel and disdainful beauty. The Governor then bids them be reconciled; and on the old man pleading poverty as a reason for refusing to support his son, the Governor relieves their necessities. He soon discovers that he has been duped, and binds Ḥârith, who, as usual, had witnessed the incident, to profound secrecy.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related:—My wonted home was irksome to me in the prime of my time,

through a dreaded calamity, through a fear that came upon me:—And I poured out the cup of drowsiness, and put to their pace the camels of the night-march.—And I traversed in my journey rough places which no steps had smoothed, to which the Ḳaṭa would not find its way;—Until I came to the domain of the Khalifate, and the sanctuary which guards from fear.—Then I put off the sense of dread and its conception, and robed myself in the raiment of security and its vest;—And limited my care to the culling of delight, and the looking upon pleasure.—Now I went forth one day to the Precinct to exercise my good steed, and to circle my eye among its beauties.—And behold! horsemen who followed each other, and men on foot who swarmed:—And eke an old man long of tongue but short of cloak, who held by the collar a lad fresh in youth but worn of tunic.—So I spurred on the track of the spectators until we arrived at the gate of the Prefecture.—And there was the Master of Protection sitting squarely on his cushion, awing by his deportment.—Then said the old man to him: "God magnify the Governor, and set his foot on high!—Know that I bred this youth from a weanling, and brought him up from an orphan; and then failed not in instructing him.—But when he now was shrewd and strong, he bared and brandished the sword of enmity.—Though I imagined not that he would be perverse to me, and insolent, since by me was he watered and made fruitful."—Said the lad to him: "On what offence of mine hast thou hit, that thou publishest this foul thing of me?—For, by Allah, I have not covered the face of thy kindness; I have not rent the veil of thy secret; I have not broken the staff of thy estate; I have not

disregarded the rehearsing of thanks to thee."—Then said to him the old man, "Woe to thee, what guilt is fouler than thine, what vice more base than thy vice? —For thou hast claimed my magic and appropriated it; thou hast arrogated my poetry and stolen it.—Now among poets the stealing of poetry is more shameful than the stealing of the white and yellow; and their jealousy over the daughters of their wits is as their jealousy over virgin daughters."

Said the Governor to the old man, "When he stole, did he *flay*, or *transform*, or *copy*?"—Said he, "Now by Him who made poetry the register of the Arabs and the interpreter of scholarship, he did nought less than dock the completeness of its exposition, and make foray on two thirds of its flock." Said the Governor, "Recite the verses altogether, that it may appear what he took from the sum of them."—Then he recited:

O thou who courtest the base world, know that it is a net of destruction, a pool of impurities;

A habitation which, when it makes thee laugh to-day, makes thee weep to-morrow: away with such a habitation!

When its clouds overshadow no thirst is refreshed by them; for they are a dry cloud that deceives.

Its forays cease not, nor is its prisoner ransomed even by the mightiest of stakes.

Towards how many a one made wanton by false confidence in it, until he has shown himself contumacious, one overstepping his power,

Has it turned the back of the shield, and made its blades to lap of his blood, and leaped to the taking of revenge!

So keep guard on thy life, lest it pass away lost in the world, left astray without any protection.

And cut the bonds of thy love for the world and thy seeking of it; so shalt thou find right guidance and comfort of the inner parts.

And when it makes a truce from its stratagem, be thou on thy

watch against the warring of enemies, and the assault of the treacherous:

And know that its calamities come suddenly, even though the goal be far, and the journeys of the fates be tardy.

Then said the Governor: "And now what did this lad?"—Said the old man, "Of his meanness in recompensing he made an attack on my six-feet verses, and cut off two feet, and diminished from their measures two measures, so that the loss in them is a double loss."—Said the Governor, "Shew what he took and whence he cut."—He said, "Let thy hearing feed of me; give thy heart to understand me;—That thou mayest perceive well how he drew the sword upon me; that thou mayest estimate the greatness of his transgression towards me." Then he recited, and his sighs ascended:

O thou who courtest the base world, know that it is a net of destruction;

A habitation which, when it makes thee laugh to-day, makes thee weep to-morrow;

When its clouds overshadow no thirst is refreshed by them.

Its forays cease not, nor is its prisoner ransomed.

Towards how many a one made wanton by false confidence in it, until he has shown himself contumacious,

Has it turned the back of the shield, and made its blades to lap of his blood!

So keep guard on thy life lest it pass away, lost in the world, left astray;

And cut the bonds of thy love for the world, and thy seeking of it, so shalt thou find right guidance.

And when it makes a truce from its stratagem, be thou on thy watch against the warring of enemies:

And know that its calamities come suddenly even though the goal be far.

Then turned the Governor to the boy and said, "Perdition on thee for a rebellious disciple and a thieving pupil!"—But the lad said, "May I remain aloof from scholarship and its sons! may I be joined to whoever

is adverse to it, and breaks down its edifices! if ever his verses came to my knowledge before I connected my own chaplet,—For it is only that our thoughts have chanced to draw at the same source as the hoof oft falls on the hoof-print."

Said Al Ḥârith: Now it was as though the Governor allowed the truth of his assertion and repented of the hastiness of his blaming.—And he kept thinking on what means would disclose to him the truth, and how he might distinguish the genius from the fool;—And he saw no way but to set them to a contest, and to bind them together with the cord of rivalry.—So he said to them, "If ye wish for the exposure of him that lacks, and for the manifesting of the true from the false, do ye now alternate in versifying and contend, wheel in the race of verse-completing and run together:—That through clear proof he who perishes may perish, he who lives may live."—They said to him with one tongue and an agreeing answer, "We are content with thy testing, so give us thy command."—He said, "Of all the kinds of eloquence I am fondest of tejnîs, and I look upon it as the chief of them.—So string now ten verses, weaving them with its colouring, broidering them with its ornament;—And put in them the tale of my condition in respect to a mistress of mine, who is rare of form, dark red of lip, graceful in undulation, but full of pride and fault-finding, given to feign forgetfulness of agreement, and to prolong denial, and to break promise, while I am as her slave."—Then started forth the old man as the winning steed, while the youth followed him like the second in the course.—And they raced together verse by verse in

this order, until the series of verses was perfected and made up:

Old Man. There is a ruddy-lipped one who has compassed my enslaving by the delicacy of her utterance, and left me the companion of sleeplessness through her perfidy.

Youth. She has assayed to slay me by her aversion: truly I am in her bond, since she has gotten my heart altogether.

Old Man. I give faith to her falsehood for fear of her turning from me; I am content to listen to her folly through dread that she should fly me.

Youth. I deem her tormenting to be sweet; and as often as she renews my torment the love of being kindly to her is renewed in me.

Old Man. She is forgetful of duty, and to forget is a fault; she angers my heart—the heart which guards her secret.

Youth. What is most wonderful in her is the glorying of her vanity; yet do I make too much of her for me to speak to her of her pride.

Old Man. From me she has praise sweet of fragrance; but my lot from her is a folding up of love after its out-spreading.

Youth. Oh! if she were just she would not be fault-finding; but she wrongs me; another, and not I, gathers the dew of her mouth.

Old Man. Were it not for her graceful motion I would turn my rein in haste to another, the light of whose full moon I might look upon.

Youth. But notwithstanding the discordance between her and me, I hold the bitter as sweet through my docility to her command.

Now when in alternation they had recited these verses to the Governor, he was amazed at the wit of two so justly balanced,—And said, "I testify before God that ye are the Farḳadân of heaven, and like a pair of fire-staves in their case.—Now surely this youth, he spends of what God has given him; through his own wealth he is independent of another.—So, old man, repent of thy suspicion of him, and turn again to honouring him."—Said the old man, "Far be it that my love should return to him, or my confidence cleave to him;—For I have proved his ingratitude for kind-

ness; I have been tried by him with shameful revolt." —But the lad interrupted him and said, "O friend, know that contention is ill luck, and spite meanness; to hold suspicion as truth is a sin; to vex the innocent is a wrong.—And granted that I have committed an offence and wrought a crime, rememberest thou not what thou didst thyself recite to me in the season of thy familiarity?

Pardon thy brother when he mingles his right aiming with error;
And shrink from rebuking him if he swerve or decline;
Keep to thy kind dealing towards him whether he thank the kindness or slight it:
Be thou obedient when he revolts; be thou lowly when he magnifies himself; draw near to him when he goes from thee:
Keep faith with him even though he fail in what thou and he have stipulated;
And know that if thou seek a perfect man thou desirest beyond bounds.
Who is there who has never done ill? Who is there whose deed is always fair?
Dost thou not see the loved and the hated linked together in one class,
As the thorn comes forth on the branches with the fruit that is gathered.
And the delight of long life, lo! there mingles with it the trouble of hoariness.
If thou examine well the sons of the time thou wilt find the most of them but refuse.

Then began the old man to dart his tongue as darts the serpent, and to gaze with the gazing of the towering hawk.—And he said, "By Him who hath adorned the heaven with its fires, and sent down the water from the clouds, truly my declining from reconciliation is but from fear of ignominy.—For this lad was accustomed that I should victual him, and have regard to his affairs. —And erewhile fortune poured plenteously, and I was not a niggard.—But as for now, the time is frowning,

the contents of life are misery: so that this my garb is a loan, and my house not a mouse approaches it."—Then the heart of the Governor grew tender at their speech, and he was pitiful to them because of the changes of their nights.—And he inclined to distinguish them by his help, and he bade the lookers-on to withdraw.—Said the narrator: Now I had been gazing at the face of the old man, that perchance I might get a knowledge of him when I should spy his features.—But the crowding would not discover him, nor open to me that I might approach him.—But when the rows were broken, and the bystanders sped off, I marked him, and behold he was Abû Zayd, and the lad was his lad, and I knew then his purpose in what he had done.—And I was near swooping down on him, to make myself known to him, but he threw me off with a glance of his eye, and stopped me with a sign of his hand.—So I kept my place, and delayed my departing: and the Governor said, "What is thy wish, and wherefore is thy staying?"—Quickly the old man took him up, and said, "He is my friend, the owner of my clothes."—Then the Governor was pleased to be friendly with me, and permitted me to take seat.—And he made largess to them of two robes of honour and presented them with a sum in coin.—And stipulated with them that they should live together in kindness until the coming on of the Day of Fear.—Then they rose up from his hall, lifting their voices in thanks for his benefits.—But I followed them that I might know their abode, that I might supply myself of their talk.—And when we had traversed the domain of the Governor, and had come to the empty plain, one of his guards overtook me, recalling me to his

court.—So I said to Abû Zayd, "I think he does not send for me save that he may question me: now what shall I say, and in what valley shall I roam with him?" —He said, "Shew him the folly of his heart, and how I have played with his understanding, that he may know that his breeze has met with a whirlwind, that his streamlet has encountered the deep."—I said, "I fear that his anger will be kindled, and so his blaze scorch thee; or that his caprice will quicken, and so his violence come upon thee."—He said, "I am now setting off for Roha, and how should Sohayl and Soha meet together?"

Now when I was in presence of the Governor, whose hall was by this time empty, and whose austerity had cleared away, he took to describing Abû Zayd and his worth, and blaming his evil fortune.—Then he said, "I conjure thee by God, art thou not he who lent him the suit?" (dast)—I said, "No, by Him who has set thee on that cushion, (dast) I am not the owner of the suit, (dast) but thou art he against whom the game (dast) has gone."—Then his eye-balls went askance, and his cheeks reddened.—And he said, "By Allah, it never baffled me yet to expose a suspicious person, or to discover a knave.—But I never heard of a Shaykh who cheated after he donned the saintly cloak; yet, as for this one, he has deceived to the last.—Now how call you that monkey."—I said, "Abû Zayd." He said, "Abû Kayd is more fitting for him than Abû Zayd: and dost thou know where the villain is strolling to?"—I said, "He dreaded thee on account of having overstepped his bound, and he journeyed away from Bagdad at once."—He said, "May God not shorten his journey, or keep

him where he sojourns: for I never dealt with aught sharper than his cunning, or tasted aught more bitter than his fraud:—And were it not for the sacredness of his scholarship, I would urge on in search of him, until he came in sight for me to fall foul of him.—And now do I loathe that what he has done should be spread abroad in the City of Peace; so should I be dishonoured among men, and my dignity come to nought before the Imâm, and I be made a laughing-stock to gentle and mean."—Then he stipulated with me that I should not speak of what Abû Zayd had done as long as I remained a sojourner in this city.—Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, And I stipulated with him as one who does not equivocate, and I kept faith with him as Samuel kept it.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF THE PORTION."

This Assembly contains the "grammatical riddles" of which the author speaks in his preface. Abû Zayd, falling into the company of some refined persons who are amusing themselves in the suburbs of Bagdad, is at first despised by them for the shabbiness of his garb. But the recitation of a singer causes the conversation to turn upon the famous and never-ending controversy concerning the use of the *raf*ʿ and the *naṣb*, or, in European terminology, the nominative and accusative case, in certain Arabic phrases. The company plunge into the dispute with all the ardour which never failed to be kindled by grammatical disquisitions; and when they can come to no agreement, Abû Zayd interposes, and gives his opinion. As they do not accept it readily, and attempt to argue with him, he at once reduces them to submission by proposing twelve enigmas, involving abstruse and technical points of Arabic grammar. No one can solve them; and Abû Zayd refuses to gratify their curiosity by giving an explanation until each one of them has made him a present. Then he leaves them, refusing to drink with them on the ground that in his

declining age he had made a vow against wine. The answers are briefly given in an appendix from the pen of Ḥarîri himself.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I was in company in the portion of Ar Rabî', in the season of spring, with youths whose faces were brighter than its lights, whose dispositions were more goodly than its flowers, whose utterances were more delicate than the air of its dawns. —And through them I looked upon what would shame the flowering spring and suffice for the sounds of lutes.— And we had taken oath together for the guarding of affection and the forbidding of self-seeking; and that no one of us should hold aloof in enjoyment, or keep to himself even the smallest pleasure.—Now we had agreed together on a day whose mist had risen, whose beauty was growing, whose light cloud bade to the morning draught,—That we would amuse ourselves by going forth to one of the meadows, to pasture our eyes on the shining plots, and polish our minds by a forecasting of the rains;—So we sallied forth, and we were as the months in number, and as the two boon-companions of Jathîmeh in affection,—To a garden which had assumed its gilding and adorned itself, whose flowers were various in their kinds and hues;—And with us were the headstrong ruddy wine, and cupbearers like suns; and the singer who charms the hearer and delights him, who feasts each hearing with what it covets.—Now when we had fully taken seat, and the cups were circling to us, there intruded on us a sharp fellow, on him was an old coat:—And we frowned on him as frown the soft damsels on the gray-heads, and we felt that the purity of our day was now troubled. —But he greeted with the greeting of the intelligent;

and taking seat he opened perfume-vials of prose and verse;—But we shrank from his expansion, and hastened to roll up what he spread out; until chanted our rare singer, our charming modulator:

How long, Su'âd, wilt thou not join my cord, nor pity me for what I meet with?

I have been patient with thee until my patience is overcome, until my spirit has almost reached my throat.

But come! I am resolved to do myself right, drinking thereby to my mistress as she drinks to me;

For if union (وصلاً) please her—then union (وصلٌ); but if rupture —then rupture like a very divorce.

Said Al Ḥârith: Then we asked the player on the double-twisted strings why he *naṣbed* the first وصل, and *raf'ed* the second.—And he swore by the tomb of his parents that he had spoken as Sîbawayh preferred.—But the opinions of the company were divided as to the admissibility of the *naṣb* and *raf'*.—And a section said, "The *raf'* of both, that is correct;" and a part said, "Nothing is lawful but the state of *naṣb*;" while to the rest the answer was impracticable, and the clamouring kindled among them.—But that intruder showed the smilingness of one who knows a matter, though he spoke not a single word.—However, when the cries were still, and the scolded and the scolder were silent, he said, "O people, I will announce to you its interpretation, I will distinguish the sound phrase from the sick.—Verily the *raf'* and the *naṣb* of each وصل are lawful, and an interchange of the inflection between them;—And that is according to what is left understood, and to the virtual signification which is elided in this puzzle."—Then was the company reckless in hastening to dispute with him, and in gliding

into contention with him.—But he said: Well, since ye call to me to "Come down," and ye gird yourselves for the war:

What is the word which, as ye will, is a particle that is loved, or the name of that which contains the slender milch-camel?

And what is the noun which alternates between a singular that binds, and a plural that clings?

And what is the *s* which, when it attaches itself, takes away heaviness and loosens the bound?

And where does the س enter and depose the regent without courtesy?

And what is that which is always *manṣûb* as a term of circumstance, while only a particle makes it *makhfûḍ?*

And what is the annexed noun which lacks one of the handles of annexion, and whose power varies between evening and morning?

And what is the regent whose last joins his first, and whose reverse effects what he effects?

And what is the regent whose deputy is more spacious than he in abode, and greater in craft, and more frequent in mention of God Most High?

And in what place do males put on the veils of women, and the ladies of the alcoves go forth with the turbans of men?

And where is the keeping of ranks necessary to the struck and the striker?

And what is the noun which gives no sense except by the addition to it of two words, or the shortening of it to two letters; and in the first case there is adhesion, and in the second compulsion?

And what is the epithet which, when it is followed

by ن, he to whom it is applied lessens in men's eyes, and is set low in reputation, and is reckoned among the simpletons, and exposes himself to dishonour?

Now these are twelve questions to match your number, to balance your disputatiousness; if ye add, I add; if ye return, I return.

Said the teller of this story: Now from these his riddles, which terrified as they poured, there came on our thoughts bewilderment and barrenness.—And when it baffled us to swim in his sea, and our talismans had yielded to his enchantment,—We changed from weariness in looking at him to the seeking of instruction from him, and from the wrong of being annoyed by him to the desire of learning of him.—But he said, "Now by Him who has sent down grammar into speech to be as salt in food, and has veiled its risings from the perceptions of the vulgar,—I will not give you a wish, I will not heal for you a pain, unless every hand endow me, and each of you distinguish me by a gift."—Then remained not one in the company but was obedient to his command, and cast to him the hidden treasure of his sleeve.—And when he had got it under his wallet-string he kindled the flame of his genius.—And then did he disclose of the secrets of his riddles and of the wonders of his puzzling, that wherewith he cleared away the rust from our understandings, that whose rising he manifested by the light of proof.—And we were astonished when we understood, and we wondered when we were answered, and we repented over what had escaped from us.—And we began to excuse ourselves with the excusing of the sagacious; and we offered to him the quaffing of the wine-cup.—But he said, "Need is not

courtesy; and as for drinking, there remains in it no sweetness for me."—Then he turned up his face morosely, and plucked away his side scornfully, and recited:

Gray hair forbids me that wherein are my joys; how then should I bring together the wine and my hands' palms?

Is the morning draught of the old wine lawful, now that the hoariness of my head lights up my morning?

I swear that wine shall never again blend with me as long as my breath cleaves to my body, and my words to my speech;

That my hand shall not deck itself with the cups of must; that I will not turn round my lot among the goblets;

That I will not set my thought to the mixed drink; that I will not go joyfully to the wine;

That I will not gather myself to the wine cooled of the north wind; that I will choose no companion, save the sober.

Hoariness blots out my merriment when he writes upon my head; hated be he for a blotting scribe!

He shines forth to blame my turning the reins to pleasure; away with him for one who shines forth but to blame!

Now were I wanton while my temple is hoary, then would my lamp be put out among the lamps of Ghassân,

A people whose disposition is the honouring of their guests; and gray hair is a guest to whom honour is due, my friend.

Said Al Ḥârith: Then he slipped away as slips the serpent, and sped with the speeding of the cloud.—And I knew then that he was the light of Serûj; the full moon of scholarship that passes through the signs of heaven.—And our end was grief at his departure and separation after he was gone.

Explanation of the Arabic subtleties and grammatical riddles which are contained in this Assembly.

As for the first part of the last verse of the song, namely—فإن وصلًا الذّ به فوصلٌ (if union please her, then union), it is like the phrase المرءُ مجزيّ بعمله ان خيرًا فخيرٌ وإن شرًّا فشرٌّ (Man is rewarded according to his work; if good, good, if evil, evil.) Now

Sibawayh introduced this question into his Book, and allowed four modes of inflecting it. The first and best is that you should *naṣb* the first خير and *raf'* the second, *naṣb* the first شرّ and *raf'* the second. Then would the virtual meaning be, "If his work be good then his reward is good; and if his work be evil, then his reward is evil;" for the first is *naṣbed* through being the predicate of كان, and the second is *raf'ed* through being the predicate of an elided inchoative. And in this mode, كان and its noun are elided, because the conditional particle إن (if) points to their virtual presence; and the inchoative is also elided, because the ف, which is the answer to the condition, points to it; and that is by reason that an inchoative commonly follows ف. The second mode is that you should *naṣb* both; and then the virtual meaning of the sentence is, "If his wish be good, then he is rewarded good; and if his wish be evil, then he is rewarded evil." Here the first is *naṣbed*, because it is the predicate of كان, and the second is *naṣbed* as the object of the verb's action. The third mode is that you should *raf'* both; then the virtual sense of the sentence is, "If there be good in his work, then his reward is good; and the first خير is *raf'ed* because it is the noun of كان, and the second is *raf'ed* because it is the predicate of an elided inchoative; as was shown in the exposition of the first mode. And it may be that the first خير is *raf'ed* through being the *agent* of كان; and that the كان, which receives a virtual power here, is the complete attributive verb, with the meaning "exists," or "occurs;" which would need no predicate, as in the phrase of God Most High, "If he *be* one in difficulty." Then the virtual meaning in the example would be, "If good *be*, then the reward is good:" that is, "If good exists, then the reward is good." The fourth and weakest mode is that you should *raf'* the first on the principle explained in the third case, and *naṣb* the second on that which was mentioned in the second case. Then the virtual meaning will be, "If there be good in his work, then he is rewarded good." According to this interpretation, and by the use of the virtually understood words which are here elided, runs the inflection of the verse sung in the Assembly. And among expressions of the same kind is the sentence, "The man was killed by what he killed with; if a sword, a sword; if a knife, a knife."

Now as to the word which is a particle that is loved, or the name of that which contains the slender milch camel; it is نعم. If you use it to admit the truth of what is told you, or to promise in answer to a request, then it is a particle: but if you mean by it "camels," then it is a noun: and نعم is masculine and feminine, and is a general name for camels, and for all cattle (in which last definition camels are comprised.) And among camels is comprised the حرف; which means a slender she-camel. She is called حرف, from being likened to the حرف (edge) of a sword. But it is also said that the word means a stout she-camel; through the likening of her to the حرف (ridge) of a mountain.

As for the noun which alternates between a singular that binds and a plural that clings, it is سراويل (trowsers or drawers). Some say that this is a singular form, and that its plural is سراويلات; and according to this opinion, it is a singular; and from its being gathered round the waist, he gives it the epithet of "binding." Others say, "Nay, it is a plural, and its singular form is سروال;" and, according to this opinion, it is a plural; and the meaning of the expression "clings" is, that it is not *fully declined*. Now, the reason that this kind of plural is not fully declined (and it consists of every plural whose third letter is an *elif* followed by a strengthened letter, or by two letters, or by three letters, the middle one of which is quiescent), is on account of its heaviness, and its divergence from the other plurals, inasmuch as there is no form like it among the singular nouns. And in this riddle he gives the epithet "clinging" to that which is not fully declined.

As for the ز, which, when it attaches itself, takes away heaviness, and loosens the bound; it is the ز which is affixed to the form of plural above mentioned; as in صيارفة (bankers), صياقلة (polishers); for this form of plural becomes fully declined when the ز is affixed to it; because the ز changes it to the form of singular nouns like كراهيّة and رفاهيّة; and it is thus lightened, and becomes declinable. And in this riddle he gives to that which is not fully declined the epithet of "bound," as in the former he gave it the epithet of "clinging."

As for the س, which deposes the regent without courtesy, it is that which is prefixed to the future verb, and divides it from أن,

which, before the prefixion, was one of the *instruments of naṣbing*. The verb is then *raf'ed*, and the أن is changed from being a *naṣber* to the verb, to being the lightened أن, used in the place of the heavy. Thus, in the sentence of God, Praise be to Him, علم أن سيكون منكم مرضى (He knows that there shall be sick among you), the virtual reading is علم انّه سيكون.

Now as to that which is *naṣbed*, as a term of circumstance, while only a particle *khafḍs* it, it is عند, which is never *jerred* in choice speech, except by من; for the vulgar expression, ذهبتُ الي عندِه, is a mistake.

As to the annexed noun, which is deprived of one of the handles of annexion, and whose power varies between evening and morning; it is لدن. For this is one of the nouns which necessarily require annexion, and whatever noun follows it is *jerred* by it, except غدوة; for the Arabs make this *manṣúb* after لدن, through the frequency with which they use it in discourse: they also *nunnate* it, that it may fully appear that it is *manṣúb*, and that it is not one of the class of *jerred* nouns which are not fully declinable. Among some of the grammarians, لدن has the same meaning as عند; but the correct view is that there is a delicate difference between them; namely that the meaning of عند applies to whatever is in your possession or power, whether it be near to you or at a distance, while لدن applies only to what is in your presence and close to you.

And as for the regent, whose last joins his first, and whose reverse effects what he effects; it is يا, the reverse of which is اى; and both are among the *particles of calling*; and the effect of both upon the noun of the person called to is the same, although يا circulates more in discourse, and is of more frequent usage. Some, however, prefer that a person who is near should be called to with اى only, as he is called to with *hamzeh*.

As for the regent whose deputy is more spacious than he in abode, and greater in craft, and more frequent in mention of God Most High, it is the ب of swearing. This ب is the original particle of swearing; as is shown by its being used when the verb of swearing is expressed, as when you say أُقسم بالله (I swear by God); and by its being prefixed also to the pronoun; as when you say بكَ لا فعلنّ, (By Thee, I will do it.) Afterwards the و was

substituted for it in the oath, because they are both labial letters, and also on account of the relationship of their meanings; since the و gives the sense of union, and the ب that of adhesion, and the two meanings approach each other. Then the و, which was substituted for the ب, became more common in speech, and was more largely applied in forms of swearing; and for this reason he riddles that it is more frequent in mention of God Most High. Also the و is larger in dwelling than the ب, because the ب is prefixed only to the noun, and effects nothing but the *jerr*; while the و is prefixed to the noun, and the verb, and the particle, and sometimes it *jerrs with the oath*, and sometimes by understanding رُبَّ, and it is also ranked with the *naṣbers of the verb*, and with the *instruments of conjunction*, and for this reason he describes it by spaciousness of abode, and greatness of cunning.

And as for the place where males put on the veils of women, and the ladies of the alcoves go forth with the turbans of men; it is the first degree of the numeral, when in the state of annexion; namely, the numerals between three and ten, for they have ّه in the masculine, and are without it in the feminine, as in the phrase of Him Most High, سخّرها عليهم سبع ليالٍ و ثمانية ايامٍ حُسومًا (He compelled it upon them seven nights and eight days consecutively); while everywhere else the ّه is one of the distinctives of the feminine. You see how the rule of masculine and feminine is reversed in this case; so that each turns to a form that is not its own, and goes forth in the garb of the other.

As to the place where the keeping of ranks is necessary to the struck and the striker; it is when there is ambiguity between the agent and the patient, through the sign of inflection failing to be openly expressed in both or one of them. This takes place when they are both *maḳṣûr*, like موسى or عيسى; or belong to the nouns of indication, like ذاك and هذا. In such cases it is necessary, for the avoiding of ambiguity, that each of the two nouns should be kept in its proper order; so that the agent may be known by its coming first, and the patient by its following after.

As for the noun which gives no sense except by the addition to it of two words, or the shortening of it to two letters, it is مهما (whatever). About this word there are two opinions: one that it is com-

pounded of مه which means "stop," and of ما; the second, and the correct one, is that the root of the word is ما, to which another ما was added augmentively, as it is to إن, so that the utterance became ما ما. But the succession of two words with the same utterance became troublesome to people, and they substituted ء for the first *elif*, so that the two became مهما. This word is one of the *instruments of condition and compensation*, and when you utter it the sentence is not completed, and the meaning is not seized, except by the addition of two words after it, as, "Whatever you do I will do," so that it necessarily "adheres" to a verb. But if you shorten it to the two letters مه, meaning "stop," then the meaning is intelligible, and in that case you "compel" him you are addressing to stop.

And as for the epithet which, when it is followed by ن, he to whom it is applied lessens in men's eyes, and is set low, and is reckoned among the simpletons, and exposes himself to dishonour; it is ضيف (a guest), which, when ن is added to it, changes to ضيفن, which means one who intrusively follows the guest, and who is set down as base coin when he is tested.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF KEREJ."

There is nothing remarkable in this Assembly. Ḥârith, being in the town of Kerej, during a severe winter, sees one day an old man naked and shivering, who crouches on the ground. He is surrounded by a crowd, and recites to them some verses on his unhappy state. The wealthy, who are standing around, pity him, and give him their furs and cloaks; and among them Ḥârith parts with a useful garment. In his speech the old man had used the phrase "the *Kâfs* of winter;" and Ḥârith, when he discovers that he is Abû Zayd, follows him, requesting to know its meaning. Abû Zayd reminds him of a verse of Ibn Sukkereh, in which seven things—all beginning with the letter *Kâf*—are spoken of as necessary in order that a winter may be passed in comfort.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I was wintering at Kerej, by reason of a debt that I was demanding, and

a needful business I was performing.—And I experienced of its fierce winter and its scorching cold, that which acquainted me with sorest torment, and kept me ever seeking warmth.—So that I quitted not my lair, and the kindling-place of my fire, except through some necessity that I was urged to, or that I might give attendance at the congregation.—Now on a day whose sky was frowning, whose mist was darkling, I was forced to sally from my shelter, through a business that troubled me: —When lo! an old man, bare of skin, showing his nakedness; and he was turbaned with a kerchief, and breeched with a napkin.—And around him was a crowd, dense in its throngings; and he was reciting, and heeded nought:

O people, nothing can announce to you my poverty
More truly than this, my nakedness in the season of cold.
So from my outward misery, judge ye
The inward of my condition, and what is hidden of my state.
And beware a change in the truce of fortune:
For know that once I was illustrious in rank,
I had command of plenty, and of a blade that severed;
My yellow coins served my friends, my lances destroyed my foes;
My humped camels mourned the morning that I made the feast.
But afterward the time bared the swords of perfidy,
And spread forth the squadrons of dark afflictions,
And ceased not to tear and wear me;
Until my habitation was razed, and my milk-flow decayed,
And my price and my song went down among men,
And I became the lean beast of poverty and need,
Naked of back, stripped of my covering,
As though I were a spindle in nakedness.
No warming is mine in Ṣinn and Ṣinnabar,
Save to stand in the sun, or get a heat at the coals.
Now is there any who is a deep sea of bounty, lord of an ample robe,
Who will cloak me either with embroidered garment or ragged coat,
Seeking the face of God, and not my thanks?

Then he said: O ye lords of wealth who trail in furred robes, he that is endowed with good let him expend; he that is able to bestow, let him bestow.—For the world is treacherous and fortune trips; ability is the visit of a vision, and opportunity a summer cloud.—For, by Allah, oft have I met winter with its *Kâfs*, and prepared its necessaries before its coming:—But to-day, Sirs, my arm is my pillow, my skin is my garment, the hollow of my hand is my dish.—So let him that is wise consider my estate, and be beforehand with the changing of the nights.—For the happy man is he who takes warning by his fellow, and makes preparation for his journey.

Thereupon it was said to him, "Thou hast displayed to us thy scholarship, now disclose to us thy pedigree."—He said, "A curse on him who boasts of mouldering bones! there is no glory but in piety and choice scholarship." Then he recited:—

By thy life, man is but the son of his own day, according as that day displays itself; he is not the son of his yesterday.

There is no boast in rotten bones; there is only the glory of him who seeks glory through himself.

Then he sat down, bowed together, and shrank shivering.—And said, "O God, thou who whelmest with thy bounty, and hast bidden us to ask of thee, send thy blessing on Moḥammed and his House, and help me against the cold and its terrors;—And appoint to me some generous man who prefers others even from his straitness, who shares even though it be but a scrap." Said the narrator: Now when he had thus disclosed a soul like 'Iṣâm's, and elegancies like Aṣma'i's, the glances of my eye began to test him, and the darts of

my side-looks to strike on him, until I perceived well that he was Abû Zayd, and that his going naked was but a noose for the prey.—But he saw secretly that my recognition had overtaken him, and he mistrusted that it would expose him.—So he said, "I swear by the shade of night and the moon, by the stars and the new moonlight, that none shall *cloak* me save one whose disposition is goodly, whose face is imbued with the dew of benevolence."—Then I understood what he meant, although the company knew not his meaning.—And I was grieved at the shivering that he suffered, and at the bristling of his skin.—So I took hold on a fur coat that was my plumage by day and my bed by night; and I stripped it off me, and said "Receive it from me."—And he failed not to draw it on while my eye still looked at it.—Then he recited:

Well done he who has clothed me with a fur coat, which shall be my protection from shivering!

He has clothed me with it, preserving my heart's blood; may he be preserved from the harm of men and Jinn!

To-day he shall deck himself with my praise; to-morrow he shall be decked with the silk of Paradise.

Said Al Ḥârith: Now when he had fascinated the hearts of the company by his diversity in excellence,—They cast to him of the lined furs and the parti-coloured coats, so many that their weight oppressed him, and scarce could he lift them.—And he departed glad of countenance in his joy, invoking a rain on Kerej.—But I followed him to a point where his mistrust disappeared, and the heaven showed clear; and I said to him, "A sharp cold was that which froze thee! But go not naked again."—He said, "Fie on thee! swiftness to blame belongs not to the just; haste not

in censuring, for it is a wrong; prosecute not that of which thou hast no knowledge,—For by Him who has given the light of hoariness, and made sweet the tomb of Ṭaybeh, had I not stripped myself I should have gone home in failure, and in emptiness of wardrobe." —Then was he restive to take flight, and veiled himself in frowning, and said, "Knowest thou not that my nature is to pass from prey to prey, and to turn from 'Amr to Zayd?—Yet I see thou now checkest me and resistest me; thou makest me to lose double of what thou didst profit me.—Then spare me (God save thee), from thy vain talk; shut on me the door of thy earnest and jest."—But I pulled him with the pulling of playfulness, and held him fast to joke with him,—And said to him, "By Allah, had I not concealed thee and covered thy imposture, thou wouldst not have gotten a gift; thou wouldst not have come off more coated than an onion.—So now recompense me for my goodness, and for the covering that I gave thee, and put over thee, either by being kind enough to restore my fur, or by making known to me the Kâfs of winter." —Then he looked at me with the look of one who wonders, and frowned with the frowning of the angry, —And said, "As for restoring the fur it is a thing as impossible as the restoring of yesterday that is past, or the dead man who is gone;—But as for the Kâfs of winter, glory to God who rusted thy mind and rent the bottle of thy storing,—Since thou hast let thyself forget what I recited to thee at Deskereh of the lines of Ibn Sukkereh:

Winter comes and its needs to me are seven, when the rain confines me from business;

A home, a purse, a stove, a cup of wine after the roast meat, and a pleasant wife, and clothing.

Then he said, "Sure an answer that heals is better than a cloak that warms; so be content with what thou hast learnt and depart."—So I parted from him; and now my fur coat was gone to my sorrow, and I was in a state of shivering all the winter.

THE TWENTY-SIXTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "THE SPOTTED."

This Assembly presents another of those exercises of ingenuity in which the author delights. Al Ḥârith, being in the town or district of Ahwâz in a state of great poverty, determines to seek his fortune elsewhere. On the road he comes upon a tent whose wealthy owner, attended by his slaves, is reposing during a halt. The stranger invites him to rest himself, and Al Ḥârith soon discovers that he is Abû Zayd. He inquires the cause of this sudden prosperity, and is informed that it was produced by the improvisation of an elegant address or composition, the merits of which a great personage had thus munificently rewarded. Al Ḥârith, with his usual literary curiosity, desires to hear it; but Abû Zayd will consent only on condition that his friend shall first accompany him to Sûs, the ancient Susa, which is distant a day's journey from Ahwâz. Al Ḥârith consents, and Abû Zayd detains him in the city for a month on various pretences. At last, when Al Ḥârith will no longer stay, the adventurer tells how he had been oppressed with debt, and been delivered from it, and loaded with presents, by the Governor of Ṭûs, in Khorasan, in reward for an eulogistic composition, in which the alternate letters were pointed and unpointed. He asks Al Ḥârith whether he would prefer a sum of money or a copy of this "spotted" composition. His friend chooses the latter, and Abû Zayd dictates it, not failing to accompany it with a present to relieve his necessities.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I descended at the two markets of Ahwâz, clothed in the garb of need.—And I delayed there a space enduring adversity,

passing sombre days,—Until I looked upon the lengthening of my stay as if it were one of the hurts of vengeance,—And I viewed the city with the eye of him that hates, and I parted from it as one parts from the mouldering camp-ruin.—And I set forth from its streamlet, girded up of skirt, spurring to the abundant waters; —Until when I had journeyed from it two stations, and was distant the march of two nights, there came to my sight a pitched tent and a kindled fire.—Then I said, "I will go to them; perchance I may quench thirst or find guidance at the fire."—And when I had arrived at the shadow of the tent I saw some fair boy-servants, and furniture which thou wouldest gaze at, and an old man; on him was noble apparel, and by him was newly plucked fruit,—And I greeted him and then went aside from him.—But he laughed to me and made kindly his answer towards me, and said, "Wilt thou not take seat by one whose fruit is choice, whose pleasantry charms?"—Then I took my seat to get the prize of conversing with him, not to swallow down what was before him.—And as soon as he unveiled his accomplishments and bared his teeth, I knew that he was Abû Zayd by the beauty of his choice sayings, and the ugliness of those yellow teeth.—And we knew each other then, and two joys compassed me in that hour.—Nor could I learn by which I was purer in rejoicing and more perfect of delight;—Whether it was at his dawning forth from the darkness of his journeys, or at the plenty of his dwelling after its dearth.—Then my soul yearned that I should break the seal of his secret and enter into the cause of his prosperity.—So I said to him, "Whence is thy returning, and whither is thy

going onward, and how have thy wardrobes been filled?" —He said, "As for my coming it is from Ṭûs; and as for my destination, it is Sûs; and as for the wealth which I have reached, it is from an Address which I improvised."—Then I begged him that he would lay before me his secret, and rehearse his Address to me.—He said, "The war of Al Basûs was a less thing than what thou desirest, unless, indeed, thou wilt accompany me to Sûs."

So I followed him thither perforce, and I attached myself to him there a month.—And he, he watered me to the full with the cups of beguiling and made me to bear the bridle of expectation;—Until when my breast was straitened and my patience overcome, I said to him, "There remains to thee no pretext, nor to me aught that can divert me.—To-morrow I shall take omen of the raven of separation, and saddle away from thee with the shoes of Ḥonayn."—He said, "God forbid that I should break promise with thee or thwart thee! I have not deferred to relate to thee save that I might make thee stay.—But since thou hast doubted concerning my promise, and the suspicion of ill treatment urges thee to depart from me,—Listen to the story of my lengthened journey, and add it to the *Tales of Pleasure after Pain*."—I said, "Go on, how long is thy tether! how various are thy wiles!"—He said: Know that the frowning time cast me to Ṭûs, and then was I poor and laden; I had not the sprout or the split of a date-stone.—So the bareness of my hands made me resort to haltering myself with debt;—And I took credit by evil chance from one who was hard of nature:—For I fancied it would be easy to find

a market for my poetry, and I enlarged in spending;—And recovered not until that debt burdened me, whose due attached to me, whose claimant beset me.—Then was I bewildered at my state, and showed my creditor my difficulty;—But he believed not my poverty and drew not off from worrying me;—Nay, he was instant in demanding and obstinate in carrying me to the Kadi;—And as often as I humbled myself to him in speech, and besought of him the grace of the generous,—And would dispose him to show mercy to me by lenity, or to wait for me till competence,—He said, "Set not thy desire on being waited for while thou holdest fast the bright gold;—For, by thy existence, thou seest not the paths of deliverance ere thou show me the meltings of the pure ore."—And when I saw the sharpening of his contention, and that there was no refuge to me from his hand, I made a quarrel with him, and then I assaulted him,—That he might carry me up to the Governor having authority over offences, not to the Judge of civil wrongs.—And this was by reason of what had reached me of the eminence of the Governor and his virtue, and the severity of the Kadi and his meanness.—Now when we were present at the gate of the ruler of Ṭûs, I perceived that I should have nor hurt nor harm.—So I called for ink-flask and paper, and composed for him a *Spotted* Address, and this it it:

The qualities of our Lord are loved, and at his court-yard there is abiding;—And nearness to him is as gifts, and farness from him as destruction;—And his friendship is as pedigree, and his estrangement as calamity;—His sword's edge is sharp, and the stars of his virtue gleam.—His continence adorns, and the rectitude of

his road is plain.—His understanding turns and tries, and his fame goes east and west.

The ruler, the intelligent; surpassing, excelling; understanding, ingenious; impatient of baseness, loathing it;

Replacing, consuming; distinguished, incomparable; illustrious, virtuous; quick-witted, fastidious;

Marvellous when he discourses; able when the stir of ill befals, and the dreaded calamity grows mighty.

The chaplets of his honour are self-strung, and the rain-storm of his largess showers;—The gift of his hand flows freely, while avarice from his heart sinks away.—The teat of his liberality is milked, and the gold of his chests is spoiled.—He whom his band gathers to itself prospers and overcomes; the merchant of his gate makes gain by beguiling him.—He refrains from wronging the innocent, and is free from the foulness of the transgressor.—He unites his gentleness with dignity, and turns aside from the path of the niggardly.—He is not given to leap at the opportunity of evil, but abstains with the abstaining of the righteous.

And therefore is he loved, and his continence merits the infatuation he inspires, since its pure essence beguiles all.

His qualities are bright, and gleam; and his arrow is an arrow which overcomes when thou shootest against it.

He is gentle, he is cheerful; one who makes good when his friend slips, nor is there any doubt of his desert.

Not miserly, nay, but bountiful; open when he is solicited; one who goes forth, his gate keeps him not close.

When want bites, he breaks the edge of its biting by his succour, and its tooth falls out.

And it is fitting that whoever is wise and understanding, whoever is near and far, should submit himself to the hero of the time, the restorer of the palsied.—For since he sucked the breast of his fostering, he has been distinguished by the abundance of his shower.—He

raises the fallen, and comforts him; if he helps he gladdens; if he contends in honour, he routs his adversary, and returns with a clear right.—He prepares fatigue for him who shall rule after him; he is lauded as often as men move him to kindness, or prove him in deed; he crowns his virtues with the love of his suppliants.

May he never become void of gladness, may the shadow of his prosperity be lengthened.

For he is virtuous in the sight of whoever contemplates the shining of his stars.

He adorns the graces of his culture by clothing himself with the fear of his Lord.

And may there prosper my Lord his gain of honours, firmly rooted and large, and his excelling in benefits that are perfect, that publish themselves:—And may the helping of his servant with a portion from his abundance accord with the pious offerings of His Honour:—For his servant is a child of the noble, though a wanderer from dearth; one wounded by calamities that have scarred him, who strings chaplets that voyage afar.—When he surges to the harangue there is found none to speak like him; for Ḳoss would then be as Bâḳil.—For when he embellishes thou wouldst say, "Garments of Yemen have been embroidered," thou wouldst think that a garden had sprouted.—This is so, and then also his draught is but a draining, and his food is borrowed; his dawn is the glooming, and his cloak is worn out.—And now does he quake at the raging of a tyrannous creditor, who harasses him because of a debt that attaches to him.—But if my Lord will mercifully avert him from me by the gifts of his hand, he will belt himself with glory that surpasses, and come off with the reward of loosing

me from the chain.—May the qualities of his disposition never fail to aid whoever watches the promise of his lightning-cloud.—By the grace of the Lord, who is without beginning, who liveth now, and is without end.

Said Abû Zayd: Now when the Governor had discerned the pearls of my Address, and caught a glance of the secret committed to it,—He made sign at once for the paying of my debt, and decided what was between my adversary and myself.—Then he appropriated me for his ostentation, and distinguished me by his preference.—And I remained a few years prospering in guestship with him, and pasturing in the oasis of his bounty,—Until, when his gifts had overwhelmed me, and his gold had lengthened my skirt, I contrived to depart in the fair condition that thou seest.

Said Al Ḥârith: Then I said to him, "Thanks to Him who destined to thee the meeting with the kind one, the noble, and delivered thee by him from the pressure of thy creditor."—He said, "Praise to God for happiness of fortune and freedom from the contentious adversary."—Then he said, "Which is more pleasing to thee, that I should share with thee of the gift, or present thee with the Spotted Address?"—I said, "The dictation of the Address will be more pleasing to me." He said, "And that too, by thy Truth, is the lighter upon me: for truly the gift of that which goes in at the ears is easier than the gift of that which comes out of the sleeves."—But then it was as if he scorned the meanness, and grew ashamed, for he gave me the Address and a present together.—Thus I gained from him two lots, and parted from him with two booties, and returned to my home, cool of eye, through having gotten both the Address and the coin.

THE

ASSEMBLIES OF AL ḤARÏRI

Khasim b. Ali
al-Hariri.

ORIENTAL TRANSLATION FUND.

NEW SERIES.

III.

THE

ASSEMBLIES OF AL ḤARÎRI,

Translated from the Arabic,

WITH NOTES,

HISTORICAL AND GRAMMATICAL.

BY

DR. F. STEINGASS.

Editor of the latest Arabic text of Ḥarîri's Assemblies, and Author of English, Arabic and Persian Dictionaries.

Prefaced and Indexed

BY

F. F. ARBUTHNOT, M.R.A.S.

VOL. II.

CONTAINING THE LAST TWENTY-FOUR ASSEMBLIES.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY,

AND SOLD AT

22, ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON.

1898.

To

THOMAS CHENERY, M.A.,

Born 1826; Died 1884.

We know not what happens to us spiritually after death, and can only repeat in the words of the Koran, "We belong to God, and unto Him we shall surely return." Still, if there be such a thing as continuation, should you (wherever you may be) happen to learn that your great work here has been completed and indeed, the fact will not, I trust, displease you.

Admiringly yours,

F. F. ARBUTHNOT.

PREFACE.

THE great work of Harîri consists of fifty Makâmât, or Assemblies. Of these the late Mr. Thomas Chenery translated and published the first twenty-six, with copious and valuable notes, in 1867. He had fully intended to complete the translation of the remaining twenty-four, and also to prepare an Index to the two volumes. But called away to the editorship of the *Times* in 1877, his hopes and expectations were never fulfilled, and he died in 1884, leaving his task unfinished.

In 1891 the Oriental Translation Fund, which had existed from 1828 to 1878, was revived under the same name, but as a new series. Among the works that came under the consideration of the committee appointed by the Council of the Royal Asiatic Society, the translation and annotation of the remaining twenty-four Assemblies of Hariri, proposed by Dr. F. Steingass, held an important place, and was accepted.

By the courtesy of the executors of the late Mr.

Chenery, two hundred and fifty unbound copies of his work were obtained and purchased, and during these negotiations, with zeal and ability Dr. F. Steingass translated the remaining twenty-four Assemblies, and explained them with important and valuable notes. To the above a complete descriptive index has been added, and these two volumes, bound with the covers of the Oriental Translation Fund New Series, form the issue for 1898 in continuation of the works which have been annually published by the Fund since 1891.

Mr. Chenery's introduction to the first volume (extending from pages 1 to 102) contains such a complete survey of the whole work that it is hardly necessary to add to it. But the contents of the second volume continue to show the wonderful subtleties, pliabilities, fertilities, boundless resources and extraordinary richness of the Arabic language. A careful perusal of the two volumes will fully bear out the generally-expressed opinion that, next to the Koran, the Assemblies of Ḥarîri are the most celebrated production of Arabic literature.

Throughout these Assemblies, as Chenery says in his notes at page 273, "Not only are verses of the Koran freely introduced, but the whole language is tinged with allusions to it, which are almost imperceptible to

the European, but which are readily caught by a Moslem who knows the sacred work by heart." In the same way there are many and constant allusions to Arab proverbs, which form a very valuable and instructive addition to the work. Every mention of them, and every allusion to the Koran, have been carefully noted in the index, and, though the references are numerous, it will enable the student or the enthusiast to go through the details of them without any difficulty. This also applies to other subjects, such as Traditions, Legends, Arab manners and customs, etc.

Dr. Steingass has completed his portion of the work under great physical difficulties. For some part of the time he was actually blind, and even after his recovery was obliged to be extremely cautious so as not to overstrain his eyesight. His Student's Edition of the Arabic text of the Assemblies of Ḥarîri was published by Sampson Low, Marston and Co. in 1897, while his translation of the last twenty-four Assemblies follows in 1898.

One word about the transliteration from the Arabic of the second volume, regarding which Dr. Steingass was much concerned. Since 1867 considerable progress has been made in this subject, and he was naturally anxious that the names of the people and the places as spelt by Mr. Chenery should be spelt in the

style now generally in use. Consequently there was some difference between the transliteration of Mr. Chenery and Dr. Steingass, and it was necessary to decide how this matter should be dealt with.

For the sake of uniformity, it seemed both advisable and desirable that the names of people, places and things should be spelt in the second volume as in the first, and I insisted, much against Dr. Steingass's wish, that this should be done. In this, then, the transliteration of the two volumes will be found to agree, and as regards the rest, Dr. Steingass has had a free hand. The difference between the spelling of the two translators will be found in Appendix B at the end of the second volume.

The Index to the whole work is rather long, but it was absolutely necessary to give a short description of the various people who appear upon the scene, so that it might be understood at a glance who and what they were. This has been curtailed as much as possible, but further i formation about them can be obtained from the following works, translated for the Oriental Translation Fund Old and New Series :

(1) Ibn Khallikán's Biographical Dictionary (O.S.).

(2) Hajji Khalfeh's Lexicon (O.S.).

(3) Mas'udi's Historical Encyclopædia (O.S.)

(4) Tabari's Chronicles (O.S.).

(5) Mirkhond's "Rauzat-us-safâ," or "Garden of Purity" (N.S.).

The following works will also be found useful for reference.

(6) Hughes' "Dictionary of Islâm" (W. H. Allen and Co., London. 1885).

(7) Sale, Rodwell, and Palmer's Translations of the Koran.

(8) Freytag's Translation of Arab Proverbs into Latin, in three volumes.

(9) Burton's "Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah" (Tylston and Edwards, London, 1893).

(10) "Arabic Authors" (William Heinemann, 1896).

Although thirty years have elapsed since Mr. Chenery published his valuable translation of the first twenty-six Assemblies of Ḥarîri, it is a matter of congratulation that the whole work has now been completed and indexed, and that it has been done into English nd in England.

F. F. ARBUTHNOT.

22, ALBEMARLE STREET,

LONDON, W.

THE ASSEMBLIES OF AL HARÎRI.

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF THE TENT-DWELLERS."

In this Assembly, which Ḥarîri himself marks out as of some importance from a philological point of view by attaching to it a short commentary of his own, Al Ḥârith records another of his early reminiscences. In his youth he cherished a strong desire to mingle with Arabs of the desert, in order to make himself familiar with their manners and idioms. After having acquired, by strenuous exertion, a live-stock of camels and sheep, he settles amongst a Bedouin tribe of genuine descent, who willingly accord him their protection. One night a valuable milch camel went astray, and he sets out on horseback in search of her. During the night and the ensuing forenoon his efforts to find her are unavailing, and when mid-day grows high [approaches] with its oppressive heat, he feels compelled to seek shelter and rest under a shady tree. Scarcely has he done so, when he perceives a solitary wanderer nearing his resting-place. With mingled feelings of annoyance at the intrusion of a stranger, and of hope that he might hear through him news of his strayed camel, he awaits his coming. On his closer approach, however, he recognises in him Abû Zayd, whose welcome companionship makes him almost oblivious of his loss. In reply to his affectionate inquiries, Abû Zayd improvises some beautiful verses, in which he describes in racy language his Bohemian way of living, which renders him independent of favours that would have to be courted by self-ab ement, more hateful to him than death itself. After having questioned on his part Al Ḥârith as to the re on of his presence in this lonely spot, and being told about the lost be t, and the hitherto fruitless search for her, he begs leave to take his

noon-day sleep, and is soon deeply drowned in it. Al Hârith tries to keep awake, but the lull in their conversation makes him succumb to his drowsiness, and when he rouses himself at night-fall he finds to his dismay that Abû Zayd is gone together with the horse. In sore distress he awaits the morning, when he sees a rider on a camel travelling in the desert, to whom he waves his garment, to attract his attention, but the signal remains unheeded, and he has to run after the man, intending to ask him for a lift, however grudgingly it might be granted. Having reached him, he perceives on closer scrutiny that the man is seated on the lost camel. He drags him down from her back, and a violent altercation takes place, in the midst of which Abû Zayd again appears on the scene, and his coming, after yesterday's experience, at first fills Al Hârith with misgivings as to his further intentions. Abû Zayd, however, at once sets his mind at rest, and addressing his antagonist in stern and threatening terms, soon puts him to flight. Then, guessing at the struggle between resentment and gratitude in Al Hârith's breast, he recites some pithy lines, in which he advises him to make the best of a losing bargain and to forbear both thanks and rebuke. So they separate as fairly good friends, and Al Hârith returns home, having recovered his camel, but lost his horse.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related : In the prime of my life that has fleeted, I had a leaning towards intercourse with the people of the hair-tents, so that I might take after their high-mettled spirits and their Arab tongues. So I bestirred myself with the alertness of one not lacking in industry, and began to roam through low-lands and high-lands, until I had got together a string of those that groan [*i.e.*, camels], along with a flock of those that bleat [*i.e.*, sheep]. Then I betook myself to some Arabs, [fit to be] lieutenants of kings, sons of speech [saws]. They gave me a home with them in safest vicinity, and turned [blunted] from me the edge of any [hostile] tooth. No care alighted upon me while I was with them, no arrow struck [the smoothness] of my rock, until one night, bright with

full-moon-sheen, there strayed from me a she-camel profuse of milk-flow. Then my heart suffered me not to forbear the quest of her, and to throw her halter upon her hump [allowing her to wander at will]. So I sprang upon a swift-paced steed, planting a trembling lance between thigh and stirrup, and fared forth all the night, scouring the desert, and exploring every copse and treeless place, until the morning dawn unfurled its ensigns, when the crier calls to prayer and to salvation. Then I alighted from my beast for the acquittance of the written ordinance, after which I bestrode him again, trying his mettle to the utmost. While I was coursing along, I saw no trace but I tracked it, no ridge but I mounted it, no valley but I fared across it, no rider but I questioned him; but withal my toil was bootless, and its gang to the watering-place found no [way of] return, until the heat waxed blinding, and the scorching noon-day sun would have distracted Ghaylân from his [beloved] Mayyah.

Now the day was longer than the shadow of the spear, and hotter than the tears of the bereft mother, and I made sure that, unless I sought shelter from the glow, and rested myself with slumber, excessive weariness would throw me prostrate with sickness—nay, Sha'ûb [the severer] would cling to me. Hence I bent my way towards a Sarḥah tree, abounding in branches, with boughs thickly leaved, that I might sleep my noon-tide, till to the brink of sun-down; but by Allah, scarcely had my breath fetched air and my horse rested, when I beheld one coming from the left, in the garb of a wayfarer, who resorted to my place of resort, maki g straight for the spot I had chosen. Then I grudged

his wending whither I had wended, and took refuge with Allah from the annoy of any sudden intruder. But then, again, I hoped that he might chance to be a bringer of news, or approve himself a guide [to my lost one]. And when he came nigh my tree, and had all but reached my biding-place, I found it was our learned friend [Shaykh] of Serûj, wearing his wallet by way of belt, and his travelling gear under his arm. Then he accosted me with friendliness, and made me forget my loss, and I inquired of him, whence he hailed just then and how he fared within and without. Forthwith, without a word of demur, he recited on the spur of the moment:

"Say to him, who would look into the inward state of my affair, thou shalt meet at my hands with all honour and regard.

I am roving from land to land, a night-traveller from one trackless desert to the other.

The chase yields me food, the sandal is my riding-beast, all my equipment the wallet and the ferruled staff.

If I chance to alight in a city, my abode is the garret of the hostelry, and my boon-companion a scroll.

There is nothing mine, that I miss when it is gone, or fret about when the vicissitudes [wiles] of time rob me thereof;

Save that I pass my night free from concern, and my mind has severed partnership with sorrow.

I sleep at night the fill of my eyelids and my heart is cool of burning grief and anxiety;

I reck not from what cup I sip, and sip again, or what is the sweetness that comes from the bitter-sweet;

No, not I, though I allow me not abasement to become an easy road to bounties;

For if an object of desire dons the raiment of shame, out on hi who courts a gift,

And whenever a wretch inclines to baseness, my nature shrinks from his fashion and inclining.

Death for e, no base deed, mount the bier liefer, than embark in villainy."

Then he raised his glance to me, and said: "For some purpose did Ḳoṣayr cut off his nose." So I told him the tale of my strayed camel, and what I had endured this day and the by-gone night; and he said: "Leave concerning thyself about things departed, or pining for that which has perished; regret not what is gone, though it were a river of gold; nor incline to him who veers from thee, and kindles the fire of thy anguish, though he were the son of thy loins, or the own brother of thy soul." Then he added: "Hast thou a mind to a noon-day nap, and to abstain from talk? For forsooth our bodies are [as it were] jaded camels for fatigue, and the heat is all aglow; whereas there is nothing to furbish up the mind, and to enliven the languid, like sleep at noon while the blaze is fiercest, especially [most so] in the two months, when the skin of the camel shrivels through excessive thirst." I replied: "As ṭhou wilt, I have no wish to thwart thee." Thereupon he made the ground his bed, and fell a-dozing, nay, soon he gave evidence that he was fast asleep. But I sat leaning on my elbow, to keep watch, and not to succumb to slumber; however, drowsiness overpowered me, after our tongues were bridled, and I recovered not myself, until night had crept in, and the stars began to twinkle, when, lo, there was no friend of Serûj, and, alas, no saddle-beast, so that I passed a night such as Nâbighah sings of, pregnant with the grief of Jacob, while I was battling against my sullenness, and vying with the stars in wakefulness. Now I bethought me that I had henceforth to fare on foot, now in what wise I should retrac my homeward way; until, at the smile of morn, there

appeared to me on the horizon a rider, ambling over the plain with the stride of the ostrich. So I signalled to him with my garment, hoping that he would turn in my direction. He, however, heeded not my signal, nor took he compassion on my anxiety, trotting on at his leisure and smiting my entrails with the arrow of his contempt. Then I hastened in his track, to ask him for a mount behind him, though I should have to put up with his superciliousness. But when I reached him, by dint of hard running, and cast my eye on him with a sweeping glance, I found that my camel was his riding-beast, and what I had lost he had picked up. Then I belied me not in dragging him from her hunch, and tussling with him for the end of her halter, calling out: "I am her master; it is I from whom she has strayed; to me belongs her colt and her milk! So be not like Ash'ab in greediness, and give no trouble, lest thou see trouble!" But he took to abusing and shouting, and he waxed impudent, and would not be abashed; and while he assaulted and relented in turns, now acting the lion, now cowering, behold, there came upon us Abû Zayd, clad in the leopard's skin, rushing along with the rush of the furious torrent. Then I feared, that his feat of to-day might be like his performance of yesterday, that [the brightness of] his full moon would equal [that of] his sun, after which I would join the two tan-gatherers, never to be seen again, and become a [mere] tale after the substance. So I saw no help but to remind him of former bonds, nd yesterday's misdeed, and conjured him by Allah, [asking] if he came to make good my wrong, or to encompass my utter ruin. He however said: "God forfend that I

should despatch one whom I have wounded, or follow up the Simoom of my day with a deadly night-blast. Rather have I come to find out the truth of thy state, and to be a right hand to thy left." Thereupon my anxiety was allayed, and my suspiciousness subsided. I made him aware of my milch camel, and of the cloak of insolence that my mate had assumed, when he glanced at him as the lion of the thicket glances at his prey. Then he pointed his lance against him, swearing by Him who kindles the morning, that if he made not away with the swiftness of the fly, and contented himself with escape as the best part of his booty, he would pierce his neck-vein with the spear, and make his offspring and friends mourn for him. Forthwith the fellow let go the halter of the camel, and ran apace, taking to his heels in hottest haste. Abû Zayd said to me: "Seize her and mount her hump, for of the two boons, booty and witness for the faith, she is one, and one woe is easier to bear than two."

Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Then I was at a loss, whether to rebuke Abû Zayd, or thank him, and how to balance the benefit received from him, against the damage endured. But it was as if someone had whispered to him the secret of my breast, or he had divined what stirred in my heart, for he accosted me with open brow, and indited with a glib tongue:

"O brother mine who bears up with my injury better than my brethren and own kinsfolk,
If my yesterday has harmed thee, my to-day has brought thee joy.
So forgive that for the sake of this, and spare me both thanks and blame."

Then he added: "I am hasty and thou art sluggish,

how then should we agree?" Wherewith he turned away to cleave the ground, urging his steed to career, aye, what a career! But I tarried not to take seat on my beast, and return to my homestead, and after hap and mishap reached my tent-village.

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF SAMARCAND."

On one of his mercantile journeys Hârith arrives at Samarcand early on a Friday morning, and after having refreshed himself in a public bath and performed the ceremonial ablutions incumbent on the day, he hurries to the chief mosque, to be one of the foremost a ongst the worshippers. Here he listens attentively to a most impressive sermon on the instability of human destinies, and on the certainty and terrors of death. This address strikes him not only by the forcibleness of its diction, but by the peculiarity, that all the words employed in it consist of letters without diacritical points,—a peculiarity to which he alludes by calling it "a spotless bride." He, therefore, looks closer at the preacher, and soon recognises in him Abû Zayd. After the divine service is over, he accosts him, and, as usual, the meeting between them is most affectionate on both sides. Abû Zayd invites Ḥârith to acco pany him to his dwelling, and at nightfall shocks his guest by producing decanters filled with wine. Rebuke and remonstrances are airily met with some verses, spiced with Abû Zayd's reckless philosophy. Relaxing from his habitual austerity, Ḥârith for once does at Rome as the Romans do, and pledged to secrecy under the influence of the cup, he even countenances his abandoned friend before the outside world during his stay in the city.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: In one of my journeys I chose sugar-candy for a merchandise, making with the same for Samarcand, and in those days I w s upright of build, brimful of sprightliness, taking sight from the bow of enjoyment at the target of pleasures, and seeking in the sap of my youth help against the

glamours of the water-semblance [mirage]. Now I reached her on a Friday morn, after I had endured hardship, and I bestirred myself without tarrying, until a nightstead was got, and when I had carried there my sugar-candy, and was entitled to say "at home with me," I wended forthwith towards a bath, when I put from me the weariness of travel, and took to the washing of the congregation-day conformably to tradition. Then I hastened with the bearing of the humble to the cathedral mosque, so as to join those who near the prayer-leader, and offer [as it were] the fattened camel, and happily I was foremost in the race, and elected the central place for hearing the sermon. Meanwhile people ceased not to enter in troops into the faith of Allah, and to arrive singly and in pairs, until, when the mosque was crowded with its assembly, and a person had waxed equal with his shadow, the preacher sallied forth, swaggering in the wake of his acolyths, and straightway mounted the steps of the pulpit of the [divine] call, until he stood at its summit, when he gave blessing with a wave of his right hand, sitting down thereafter until the ritual of the cry to prayer was completed. Then he rose and spoke: "Praise be to Allah, the exalted of names, the praised for His bounties, the abundant in gifts, the called upon for the rescinding of calamity ;—king of the nations, restorer of rotten bones, honourer of the folks of forbearance and generosity, destroyer of 'Âd and Irem ;—whose cognizance comes up with every secret, whose compassion encompasses every obdurate in sin, whose munificence comprises all the world, whose power breaks down every revolter.—I praise Him with the praise of one who proclaims

[God's] unity and professes Islâm, I pray to Him with the prayer of the hopeful, the trusting, for He is the God, there is no God but He, the unique, the one, the just, the eternal, there is none begotten to Him, and no begetter, no companion with Him and no helpmate.—He sent forth Mohammed to spread about Islâm, to consolidate religion, to confirm the guidance of the apostles, to straighten the black-hued and the red.—He united womb-connections, he taught the fundamentals of truth, he set a stamp on the lawful and the forbidden, he regulated [laid down the rules for] the doffing and the donning of the pilgrim-cloak.—May Allah exalt his place, and perfect the blessing and benediction upon him, may He have compassion on his race, the worthy, and on his progeny, the uterine, as long as the pile-cloud pours, as long as the dove coos, as long as the cattle graze, as long as the sword assaults.—Work ye, may Allah have mercy upon you, the work of the pious, exert yourselves towards your return [on the resurrection day] with the exertion of the sound, curb your lusts with the curbing of enemies, make ready for your departure with the readiness of the blissful.—Put ye on the robes of abstinence, and put away the ailings of greed, make straight the crookedness of your dealings, and resist the whisperings of hope.—Portray ye to your imaginings the vicissitudes of circumstances, and the alighting of terrors, and the attacks of sickness, and the cutting off from pelf and kin :—Bethink ye yourselves of death, and the agony of its throwing-place, of the tomb and the awfulness of that which is sighted there, of the grave-niche nd the loneliness of the one deposed in it, of the angel nd the

frightfulness of his questioning and of his advent.—Look ye at fortune and the baseness of its onslaught, and the evil of its deceit and cunning :—How many road-marks has it effaced, how many viands embittered! how many a host has it scattered, how many an honoured king has it overthrown.—Its striving is to strike deaf the ears, to make flow the tear-founts, to baffle desires, to destroy the songster and the listener to the song. Its decree is the same for kings and subjects, for the lord and the henchman, for the envied and the envier, for serpents and for lions.—It enriches not, but to turn away, and reverse hopes ; it bestows not, but to outrage and cut into the limbs ; it gladdens not, but to sadden, and revile, and injure ; it grants no health, but to engender disease and frighten friends.—Fear ye Allah ! fear ye Allah ! May Allah keep you ! How long this persistency in levity, this perseverance in thoughtlessness, this stubbornness in sin, this loading yourselves with crime, this rejection of the word of the wise, this rebellion against the God of heaven ?—Is not senility your harvest, and the clod your couch ? Is not death your capturer, and [the bridge] Ṣirâṭ your path ? Is not the hour [of resurrection] your tryst, and the plain [or hell] your goal ? Are not the terrors of doomsday laid in ambush for you ? Is not the abode of transgressors Al-Ḥuṭamah, the firmly [safely] locked ?—Their warder Mâlik, their comeliness raven blackness, their food poison, their breathing-air the scorching blast !—No wealth prospers them, no offspring ; no numbers protect them, and no equipments. —But lo, Allah has mercy upon the man who rules his p ssion, and who treads the paths of His guid nce ;

who makes firm his obedience towards his Lord, and strives for the restfulness of his place of refuge; who works while life lasts obedient, and fortune at truce with him, and health perfect and welfare at hand;— Lest he be overtaken by the frustration of his wish, by the faltering of speech, by the alighting of afflictions, by the fulfilment of fate, by the blunting of senses, by the remedy of the sepulchres. Alack on them for a misery whose woefulness is assured, whose term is infinite! He who is remedied thereby is wretched, his distractedness has none to allay it, his regret none to pity it; there is no one to ward off that which befalls him. May then Allah inspire you with the praiseworthiest of inspirations! May He robe you with the robe of glory! May He cause you to alight in the abode of peace! Of Him I ask mercy upon you and on the people of the religion of Islâm, for He is the most forgiving of the generous, the saviour, and peace be with you."—Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Now, when I saw that the sermon was a choice thing without a flaw, and a bride without a spot, the wonderment at its admirable strain urged me on to look at the preacher's face, and I began to scan it narrowly, and to let my glance range over him carefully, when it became clear to me by the truth of tokens, that it was our Shaykh, the author of the Assemblies.—There was, however, no help from keeping silent for the time being; so I withheld until he had left off praying, and "the dispersing on the earth" had come. Then I turned towards him, and hastened to meet him, and when he spied me he quickened his pace, and was profuse in doing me honour, bidding me to accompany him to his abode and

making me a confidant of the particulars of his intimate affairs.—Now, when the wing of darkness had spread, and the time for sleep had come, he brought forth wine-flasks secured with plug, whereupon I said to him: "Dost thou quaff it before sleep, and thou the prayer-leader of the people?" But he replied: "Hush! I by day am preacher, but by night make merry."—Said I: "By Allah, I know not whether to wonder more at thy unconcernedness as to thy kinsfolk and thy birthplace, or at thy preacher-office with thy foul habits, and the rotation of thy winecup."—Thereupon he turned his face in disgust from me, and presently he said:—Listen to me:

"Weep not for a friend that is distant, nor for an abode, but turn thyself about with fortune as it turns about.

Reckon thou all mankind thy dwelling-place, and fancy all the earth thy home.

Forbear with the ways of him with whom thou dealest, and humour him, for it is the wise that humours.

Miss thou no chance of enjoyment, for thou knowest not if thou live a day, or if an age.

Know thou that death is going round, and the moon-haloes circle above all created beings.

Swearing that they will not cease chasing them, as long as morn and even turn and re-turn.

How then mayest thou hope to escape from a net, from which neither Kisrá escaped, nor Dârâ."

Said he [the narrator]: And when the cups went between us from hand to hand, and the vital spirits waxed gleeful, he dragged from me the oath that allows no exception, that I would screen his repute [secret]. So I complied with his wish, and kept faith with him, and ranked him before the great in the rank of Al Fuẓail, and let down the skirt over the turpitudes of

the night ; and this continued to be his wont and my wont, until the time for my return came, when I took leave from him, while he persisted in hypocrisy and in secretly quaffing old wine.

THE TWENTY-NINTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF WÂSIṬ."

In a Khân or inn at Wâsit, frequented by many travellers, Al Ḥârith overhears his neighbour in the adjoining room tell his son to go to the market with one person, and come back with another, both of whom he describes in enigmatical and fanciful language. His curiosity being roused, he watches the lad's exit, and finding that he starts unaccompanied, he feels still more mystified, and, therefore, follows him to the market, where he sees him give in change a loaf against a flint-stone for striking fire. Then the solution of the riddle dawns upon him, and at the same time he is convinced that the originator of this witticism could be none other but Abû Zayd. Hastening back, he finds his surmise confirmed, for the Serûji was sitting in the courtyard of the hostelry, and after a cordial greeting the two friends were soon deeply engaged in familiar conversation. In response to Abû Zayd's inquiries, Ḥârith tells him that reverses of fortune and the machinations of enemies have forced him to leave his home almost destitute. To help him out of his difficulties, the former proposes to bring about a matrimonial alliance between him and some wealthy people alighted in the Khân, whom he avers to be high-principled, and who would be contented with a dowry of 500 dirhems, a sum which the Prophet used to settle upon his wives and to fix for his daughters as a marriage portion. He promises to undertake the conduct of the transaction, and to crown proceedings by pronouncing at the wedding an address, such as had never been heard before. More eager to listen to this wonderful specimen of oratory, than to set his eyes on the prospective bride, Ḥârith lends himself to the scheme, and Abû Zayd quickly pushes the preli inaries to a satisfactory conclusion, offering himself as security for the 500 dirhems, after which he prepares some sweet-meats for the wedding entertainment. At nightfall he assembles all the inhabitants of the Khân in his room, and after having busied himself with the pretence of

some astronomical calculations, which brings the guests to the verge of sleep, he delivers at the instigation of the impatient Hârith the promised speech, in which he displays the marvellous resources of his rhetorical skill, by repeating the principal heads of the sermon in the preceding Assembly in varied diction and under fresh images, while he moreover surpasses its grammatical artifice by excluding this time even the occasionally dotted Hâ of the feminine termination from it. Then he performs the marriage ceremonies, which he concludes with the usual wish for prosperity and male offspring to the newly married couple, and produces his sweet-meats, urging Ḥârith to hand them round, instead of joining in their consumption, as he had been about to do. Scarcely have the company tasted of the dishes, when they fall senseless to the ground. Hârith, terrified, at first thinks that they have been poisoned, but Abû Zayd re-assuringly informs him that he has only drugged them. Then he coolly begins to collect the contents of all the rooms, and carefully selects everything most valuable, to carry off with him. Ḥârith is amazed at this wild freak and frightened at its consequences, but the Serûjı tells him, as far as he himself is concerned, that he and his ill-gotten affluence would soon be at a safe distance, and as for his perplexed friend, he had only to feed on the remainder of the dishes and to allow himself to be stripped, when he would not be held responsible for an outrage of which he himself was a victim; or else to join in the flight, offering even to find a new bride for him to wed. In spite of his indignation, Hârith banteringly replies, that he had enough with the first one, and would leave someone else welcome to the second; but when Abû Zayd blandly steps forward, to enfold him in a parting embrace, he draws back in disgust. Then Abû Zayd breaks forth in one of his exquisite pieces of poetry, in which he tries to justify this and many more similar enormities committed previously by the wickedness of the injured people, winding up with a sincere touch of remorse at his own sinfulness, which makes him burst out in tears and earnest supplication for forgiveness. Ḥârith softens towards him, and hoping that he may finally meet with the divine pardon, which is held out to the repentant transgressor, he sees him depart with his son; then collecting his own scanty belongings he continues his journey in the direction of Ṭîb, a town midway between Wâsiṭ and the swamps of the Baṭîḥah.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm related: The decree of waning fortune drove me to the country of Wâsiṭ, and I

repaired thither without knowing one there who would house me, or owning therein a lodging. Now when I alighted there with the alighting of the fish on the dry land, or of the white hair in the black locks, evil hap and receding luck guided me to a Khân frequented by a jumble from every land, and a medley of travellers, which, on account of the cleanliness of the place, and the civility of its inhabitants, enticed the stranger to make himself at home therein, and made him forget the air of his native country. So I secluded myself in one of its chambers, not paying an excess of rent. Then it was not but the a-twinkling of the eye, or the time to scribble a letter, that I heard my next-door neighbour say to his fellow-dweller in the room—"Rise, my dear son, may thy luck not set, nor thy adversary keep on foot, take with thee the one of full-moon face and of pearly hue, of pure root and tormented body, who was pinched and stretched, imprisoned and released, made to drink and weaned, and pushed into the fire, after he had been slapped. Then career to the market the career of the longing swain, and bring back instead of it the pregnant that impregnates, the spoiler who enriches, the saddener who gladdens, the possessor of a puff that sets on fire, and of a germ that breaks forth in light, of an emission [utterance] that satisfies, and of a gift that profits, who, when he is struck, thunders and lightens, and reveals himself in flames, and who sputters on tinder-rags." Then, as soon as the throat-bag of the roaring camel had subsided, and nothing was left but the going of him who was to go, there sallied forth a youth with a graceful swagger, and no mate with him. So I saw that it was a tight knot to make game of

understandings and to render one eager to enter into the idle fancies [absurdities]. I therefore set out in the track of the youth, to find out the meaning of the speech. Then he ceased not bustling himself with the bustle of sprites, and searching amongst the rows of market shops, until he came at last to a store of flint-stones, and gave their seller a loaf [or cake], receiving from him a fine flint in return. Then I wondered at the sagacity of the sender and the sent one, and I knew that it was of Serûji growth, and I tarried not in hastening back to the Khân, giving myself the rein, to test the truth of my surmise and whether my arrow had hit the mark in its divining. And, for sooth, I proved an expert in sharpness of sagacity, for Abû Zayd was sitting in the courtyard of the Khân. Then we congratulated each other on the meeting, and mutually paid the dues of the welcoming of friends. Whereupon he said: "What is it that befell thee, so that thou didst quit thy place?"—Said I: "Fortune broke and oppression was rife."—He replied: "By Him who sends down the rain from the clouds, and makes come forth the fruit from its sheath, times are foul and iniquity [wrong] prevails on all sides, and the helper is not to be found, but Allah is the One besought for help. How then gottest thou away and which of the twain was thy state when thou wentest off?"—Said I: "I made night my shirt and set out early in it, a starveling."—Then he pricked holes in the ground with his stick, and bethought him how to find a loan or procure a gift for me. Presently he stirred with the stirring of one to whom a prey comes near, or an opportunity presents itself, and said: "It just occurred to my

heart that thou mightest ally thyself with one who heals thy wound and feathers thy wing."—Said I: "How then am I to make union between the neck-ring and an empty purse, and who is it that will have Ẓull, son of Ẓull [Nobody, son of Nobody]?"—Then he said: "It is I, who shall drop hints of thee and for thee, and be proxy in and on thy behalf, besides that the people profess to set the broken bone, and to ransom the prisoner, and to hold in honour their kith and kin, and to consult the adviser; save that, if Ibrahîm, son of Adham, proposed to them, or Jebeleh, son of Ayham, they would not give in marriage unless for five hundred dirhems, in accordance with that which the Prophet, may Allah bless and hallow him, settled on his wives, or stipulated for the dowries of his daughters, with the proviso, that no portion should be claimed from thee, if thou wert driven to seek refuge in divorcement. Then I will deliver at the place of thy betrothal and at the gathering of thy wedding-guests an address such as has not opened an obstructed ear, and has not been pronounced the like of it in any assembly." —Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Now he roused my spirits more by the description of the address to be indited, than of the bride to be displayed, so that I said to him: "I entrust thee with the affair, so manage it with the management of him who is sharp-witted in the interest of him he loves." Forthwith he rose, trotting away briskly, then returned beaming, and said: "Rejoice at the tidings of fortune, and the milking of an abundant flow. I have already been charged with fixing the contract, and stood security for the money, so the thing is all but settled. Thereupon he took to

pledging all the people of the Khân [to be present at the appointed time], and to preparing sweet-meats for the table. Then when night had extended her tent-ropes, and every owner of a door had closed his door, he called out to the assembly: "Halloo! be present instantly," and none of them lagged to obey his voice, and to enter his room. Now, when they stood in rows before him, and the witness and witnessed upon were gathered, he busied himself in raising the astrolabe and lowering it, and in consulting the almanack and laying it aside, until the people became drowsy, and sleep drew nigh. Said I to him: "Ho, Sirrah, put the axe to the block, and free the people from sleepiness." Then he cast a glance at the stars, and breaking loose from the tie of silence, he swore by [mount] Ṭûr, and the written book, that the secret of this hidden matter should be unravelled and its memory spread forth unto the day of resurrection. Whereupon he sat in a kneeling position, and invited the ears to feed on his address, saying: "Praise be to Allah the king glorified with praise, the beloved Lord, the fashioner of every born one, the refuge of every outcast, the spreader of earth's couch, the fastener of the mountains, the sender of rains, the smoother of difficulties, who knows all secrets and penetrates them, who overthrows kings and destroys them, who makes follow each other the ages in their turns, who initiates affairs and brings them to an issue.—His bounty is universal and perfect, His rain-cloud pours and showers, He answers request and hope, He makes it easy for the distressed and widowed.—I praise Him with the praise that endureth through all times, I proclaim His unity, as Abraham, the sorrowful,

proclaimed it, for He is God, there is no God to the nations besides Him, there is none who inclines to that which would counterbalance or equal Him.—He sent Mohammed, a standard to Islâm, an Imâm to rulers, a fortifier of the lowly, an abolisher of the rights of Wadd and Suwâ, for he made known and taught, he restrained and established, he rooted firmly the principles of faith and propagated them, he confirmed promises and uttered threats.—May Allah never cease to bestow honour on him, and bring his spirit to the abode of peace, may he have compassion on his race and house, the noble, as long as a mirage glitters, as a young of the ostrich runs, as a new moon rises, as a shout that greets the same is heard.—Work ye, may Allah keep you, the best of works, and tread the paths of lawfulness, throw ye off the forbidden, and abandon it, and listen to the command of Allah, and obey it; unite ye the blood-relations and revere them, and resist the lusts and repel them; ally ye yourselves to people of righteousness and piety; and cut yourselves off from the band of wantonness and greed.—Now the seeker of your alliance is the purest of freemen as to birth, and the noblest of them as to lordliness, the sweetest as for a watering-place, and the soundest as for keeping his word.—Behold he has come to you and alighted in your sanctuary to wed your bride, the honoured, and to settle a dowry upon her as the Prophet settled upon Umm Salamah;—and he is the worthiest of sons-in-law to whom children have been trusted and who was made possessed of what he desired,—he who gives to him in marriage is not hasty nor errs he, the one who enters with him in relationship is neither foiled nor soiled.—I

ask from Allah for you to approve of his connection, and to prosper him lastingly, and may He inspire each one to seek improvement of his state and to make ready for his return. To Him be eternal praise, and glory to his Apostle Mohammed." Now when he had ended his address, marvellous of disposition, void of punctuation, he concluded the marriage contract at the settlement of the five hundred, after which he said to me: "For ease and sons!"—Then he brought forth the sweet-meats which he had prepared and set going a feast to be remembered for aye. I advanced [stepped up] to them as the company advanced [stepped up] and was nigh to stretch out my hand towards them, but he scared me from eating and urged me to hand them round, when, lo, by Allah it was not in quicker time than the eyelids meet, that the people fell prone upon their chins. Then when I saw them like the roots of a falling date-tree, or like those thrown by the daughter of the wine-cask, I knew for sooth that it was an unexampled mischief, and the mother of precedents. So I said to him: "O thou arch-fiend of thy own soul, and vile slave of thy coin, hast thou prepared for the people sweets, or a bane?"—Said he: "I have not gone beyond a mess of banj in trays of the Khalanj tree."—Then I said: "I swear by Him who makes the stars rise in brightness and guides by them all wayfarers, thou hast done a hateful thing and secured thee a record amongst shameful deeds." Thereupon I was bewildered at thought of what would come of his affair, and with fear of infection from his scab, so that my soul fluttered within me distractedly, and my side-muscles quivered with fright. Then, when he saw the

extent of my fear and the excessiveness of my anxiety, he said: "What is this burning thought and this white-hot fear? If thy concern at my offence is for the sake of me, know that I am now well off and gone, freeing this spot from my presence, and leaving it void of me, and how many like it have I quitted to remain deserted. But if it is with a view to thyself, and from apprehension of thy imprisonment, then partake of the remainder of the mess, and be contented to be without thy shirt, so as to be safe against the redresser and the seeker of redress, that thy stay after me may be tranquil. But if not, the flight! the flight! before thou be captured and dragged away." Forthwith he proceeded to clear out whatever there was in the rooms of money-sacks and chests, and began to appropriate the selected part of everything stored, and the choicest of everything measured and weighed, so that he left that which his net spared, like a bone voided of its marrow. Then after he had bagged that which he had chosen, and tied it in bundles, and had tucked up his sleeves and girded himself, he accosted me as accosts one who has donned impudence, and arrayed himself with the garb of sincere friendship, saying: "Hast thou a mind to accompany me to the Batihah, so that I may wed thee to another fair one?"—Then I made oath to him by Him who had created him to be blessed wherever he might find himself, and not of those who commit felony in a Khân, that I had it not in me to marry two freeborn and to cohabit with twain rival wives, moreover said I to him in the language of one who humours his humour, and measures to him with his own bushel: "The first suffices me for a boast, so

seek another one for the other."—Then he smiled at my speech and stepped forward to embrace me, but I turned from him my cheek and showed him my repugnance. So when he saw my shrinking back, and my aversion became manifest to him, he indited :

"O thou, who turnest away from me, for it is time's nature to be fraught with turns,

And rebukest me for my foul treatment of those whom I had for neighbours, with the rebuke of the harsh :

Thou comprehendest me not in what I have done, but as for them, I know them full well :

Heretofore I sought their hospitality, and I saw them unheedful of their guests.

I probed them, and when I tested them I found the to be base coin.

Amongst them is none but who strikes terror when he can, or else is terror-stricken.

None sincere in friendship, none trustworthy, none benevolent, none kindly disposed.

So I sprang upon them the spring of the tearing wolf upon the sheep,

And left them prostrate, as if they had been made to drink the cup of death,

And my hand possessed itself of what they had hoarded, for they were the abhorrence of men's nostrils.

Then I wended my way with booty sweet of cullings and reapings.

For sooth, often times I left behind me one wounded of entrails, who slunk after me when I had gone.

And despoiled the owners of state-chairs and carpets and curtains.

How much have I obtained by my cunning that was not obtained by the sword,

And stood my ground in terrors, such that lions would shrink from facing.

How often have I shed blood, and slain unawares and desecrated the sanctuary of the high-minded ;

How many a pernicious course have I taken into sin, how many a headlong rush,

But withal I have laid in a goodly opinion with regard to my Lord, the Co passionate."

Said the narrator : Now when he had reached this

couplet, he was excessive in weeping and persistent in asking for forgiveness, until he propitiated the inclination of my heart that had turned from him, and I hoped for him that which is hoped for the guilty who confesses to his guilt. Thereupon he let subside his flowing tears, and putting his wallet under his arm-pit, he made off, saying to his son: "Carry the rest, and Allah be the protector." Said the reporter of this tale: So when I saw the snake and the little snake slip away, and the cure terminate in the cautery, I knew that my tarrying in the Khân would drag me into ignominy. I, therefore, collected my few chattels, and gathered my skirt for departure, passing my night in faring towards Ṭîb, and relying on Allah against [the mischief of] the preacher.

THE THIRTIETH ASSEMBLY, "CALLED OF ṢÛR."

The only reason for calling this Asse bly after the city of Ṣûr (Tyre) seems to be that the Râwi, who perhaps in this case ay be identified with Harîri himself, wished to pay her a tribute of grateful remembrance for a period of exceptional prosperity, which he had passed there. The real scene of action is Cairo, whither he had journeyed from the former place under the impulse of a sudden fancy, and where he was indulging in a somewhat dissipated and indolent life of pleasure. While riding one day about the town, he encountered a gaily arrayed troop of horsemen, who, as he certained by inquiry, were on their road to witness a wedding-fe t. Hoping to eet with an enjoyable pastime, he follows them to a distant ansion, which, although grand of appearance, is adorned in an odd manner with ragged clothes, and baskets such as beggars use for carrying the produce of their rounds. He asks an aged porter for the na e of the owner of the building, and is informed that it has no p ticular m ter, but is the gathering-place of strolling people of every description, and on entering, he finds, that however poor and squalid the asse bled ay be indi-

vidually, as a congregation or guild they know how to fare luxuriously when the occasion de ands it. Presently the bridegroom appears in all his pomp, and a herald proclaims that the old and revered chief of the begging fraternity himself is about to solemnize the forthcoming marriage ceremony. The announced exalted personage steps forward and is respectfully greeted, and delivers a discourse, in which his earnest and impressive remarks on the duties of the rich towards the poor, and on the divine purpose in founding the institution of matrimony, form an amusing contrast to his description, at once high-flown and hu orous, of the couple to be united in wedlock. After the ceremony is finished, the company repair, under his lead, to a richly dressed table, and Ḥârith is on the point of departing, when the old an calls to him reprovingly and bids him to stay. He swears that he would not do so, unless the other told him who he was, and is answered in some touching verses, in which the speaker exalts in glowing colours the beauties of his native town Serûj, and bitterly bewails his expulsion from it by ruthless enemies. Ḥârith now easily recognises Abû Zayd in spite of his disguise, and the change which old age has wrought in him, and passes the remainder of the day, as well as his evenings during his sojourn in Cairo, in his instructive and delightful company.

Al Ḥâreth son of Hammâm related: I fared from the city of Manṣûr [Bagdad] to the town Ṣûr [Tyre], and when I had become there the possessor of high rank and of affluence, and powerful to raise and to abase, I longed for Miṣr [Egypt and Cairo] with the longing of the sick for the physicians, and the generous for the bestowing of bounties. So I left behind me the attachments of stay, and shook off the impediments of travel, and, bestriding [a steed like] Ibnu'n-Na'âmeh, I hastened towards her with the swiftness of the ostrich. Now when I had entered her, after sustaining hardships and being on the point of destruction, I was delighted thereat with the delight of one intoxicated by drinking morning draughts, and one dazzled by the break of morning brightness. And when I was one day loitering about, beneath me a steed of stately pace, I

beheld on short-haired nags, a troop of men like the lamps of night. So I inquired for the sake of procuring me a pleasure-trip, about the troop and their destination, when I was told that the people were witnesses and their goal a wedding to be witnessed. Then the sprightliness of youth urged me to fare along with the foragers, so as to obtain a share in the sweets of the bridal scatterings and get some of the delicacies of the festive board. Presently we came, after enduring fatigue, to a mansion high of structure, wide of area, which testified to the builder's wealth and exalted station. When we alighted from horse-back and put forward our steps to enter it, I saw its vestibules adorned with tattered garments, and garlanded [coronated] with begging-baskets hung round, and there was an aged man sitting on a cloth of piled stuff, upon a handsome bench. Now the title-page of the book, and the sight of this strange furniture, made one doubtful, and the evil augury of these ill-omened objects induced me to accost that man on the seat, and I adjured him by the dispenser of destinies to let me know who was the lord of this mansion. Said he: "It has no distinct owner and no manifest master, it is but the inn of the importune beggars and low artisans, and the den of ballad-singers and rehearsers of the traditions." Then I said within myself: "For Allah's sake, out upon a fool's errand, and the failure of my pasture," and I intended to return at once, but then I considered my sudden departure and my going back without the others to be churlish. So I entered the house reluctantly, as one drinking choking draughts [lit. drinking draughts that make one choke], or as the sparrow enters the cage. Then, lo! there were in it

richly adorned state-chairs, and spread carpets, and cushions laid in rows, and arrayed curtains. Presently stepped forth the bridegroom, swaggering in his *burdah* [mantle of striped stuff], and strutting like a lion in the midst of his attendants, and when he had sat down as though he were the son of Mâ'u's-samâ', there cried out a crier on the side of his relatives: "By the reverence due to Sâsân, grand-master of masters and pattern of sturdy beggars, none ties this knot on this day white of forehead and extremities, but he who has roved and roamed, who has been young and waxed old in adversity." Then the company [kith] on the bride's side were well pleased with that which yonder people [the bridegroom's relations] had proclaimed with regard to the bringing in their presence the one indicated. Forthwith sallied forth an old man whose stature the days and nights had bent, whose Thaghâm[1] tree the morns and eves had decked with blossoms. Then the congregation rejoiced at his approach and hastened forward to welcome him, and when he had sat down on his carpet, and the turmoil of voices had subsided, he advanced to his cushion, and stroked his beard with his hand, whereupon he spoke: "Praise be to Allah, the foremost in munificence, the ever new in bestowing bounties, to whom we are brought near by supplication, on whom we are made to rely for the accomplishment of hopes, who has ordained the legal alms from every property, and sternly forbidden the refusal of suppliants, who has impressed on man to relieve the distressed, and commanded to feed him that begs and him

[1] Thaghâm is the name of a white blossoming tree frequently used in Arabic poetry as an emblem of hoary old age.

that refuses to beg; who has described His servants in His book, the manifest, when He spoke, and He is the most truthful of speakers: 'Those who know well that the supplicant and the destitute have a claim on their riches.'—I praise Him for that which He has dispensed of wholesome food, and I take refuge with Him from hearing a prayer void of intention. And I testify there is no God but God, the One, without a partner to Him for a god, who requites the alms-giving men and women, who withdraws His blessing from usury, and rewards alms with lavish interest. Furthermore I attest, that Mohammed is His sincere servant, and His honoured Apostle. He sent him that he might efface the darkness by the light, and secure to the poor a share from the rich, and he compassioned, may God bless and hallow him, with the destitute, and lowered his wing to the lowly; he made obligatory the claims on the possessions of the wealthy, and made clear what is the due to those who have little on the part of those who have much.—May Allah bless him with a blessing that obtains for him proximity [to God's throne], as well as the elected of the stone-bench [certain Companions of the Prophet].—But now, Allah, be He exalted, has made matrimony a law so that you may be chaste, and instituted propagation so that you may multiply, for He said so that you may know: 'O ye men, we have created you from a male and female, and made you clans and tribes, so that you may recognise each other.'—Now this is Abû'd-darrâj Wallâj [in-goer], son of Kharrâj [out-goer], lord of the impudent face, and manifest mendacity, of yelping and shouting, of importunity and persistency in begging;—who

woos the shrew of her people, fit mate of her husband, Qanbas [spit-fire], daughter of Abû 'Anbas [frowning lion], for the sake of that which reached him of her being clad with pertinacity, and her excessiveness in stooping to beggary, and her quickness in grasping a livelihood, and her rising after a fall, along with her combativeness. And he has lavished upon her for a dowry a wallet and a ferruled stick, together with a kerchief and a pitcher. So marry him as one like him is to be married, and join your rope with his rope, and if you fear poverty or want [through increase of family], Allah will give you a sufficiency out of His bounty. Thus I say my say, craving forgiveness from Allah, the Mighty, for me and you, and praying that He may multiply your offspring in the beggar-dens, and guard all of you from dangers."—Then, when the Shaykh had ended his discourse, and pressed upon the bride's relatives her contract, there fell of scatterings a shower, that exceeded the limits of abundance, and would have made the miser to excel in liberality. Thereupon the Shaykh rose, trailing his skirts and preceding his rabble.—Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Then I followed him, so that I might see the array of the people, and complete the enjoyment of the day. Forthwith he turned with them to a table that its dressers had adorned, and whose every side equalled the other in beauty. And when each one had seated himself in his proper place and begun to cull freely in his garden, I slipped out of the row, and fled from the throng. But then it happened that a turn of the Shaykh's face fell in my direction, and that a glance from his eye caught me unawares, when he said: "Whither, O thou

curmudgeon? Dost thou not affect the company of him who is generous?"—Said I: "By Him, who created the heavens one above another, and permeated them with light, I will not taste a morsel, nor turn in my mouth a bit, unless thou tell me where is the sprawling-place of thy youth, and whence thy breeze is blowing." Then he fetched a deep sigh, and shed tears in torrents, until he had exhausted their flow, and bid the company to be silent, when he said to me: "Lend me thy hearing:

"My birth-place was Serûj, and there I heaved lustily my billows,
A city where all is found, and gotten readily and in abundance.
Her waters spring from Salsabîl, her fields are pleasure-meads,
Her sons and her palaces, stars they are and sidereal mansions.
Hail her breeze of fragrancy, her aspect lovely to behold!
And the flowers of her hills, when the snows have melted away.
Who sees her says the haven of earthly Eden is Serûj.
To him who leaves her sighs are meted and smothered weeping,
Such as I have met, since the Barbarians drove me thence,
Tears that pour and bitter anguish, that, scarcely calmed, will rage afresh,
Day-long grief whose engrossing cares distract the mind.
How many struggles for hopefulness, short of step, frustrated!
Would that my fatal day had come, when I was fated to depart from her."

When he had indicated his native town, and I had understood that which he had recited, I knew for a certainty that he was our most learned Abû Zayd, although old age had now shackled him. So I sallied forth to put my hand in his, and I reckoned it a booty to eat with him from his platters. And I continued the time of my stay in Cairo to resort nightly to his guest-fire, and to fill both my shells with the pearls of his utterances, until the raven of separation croaked between us, and I parted with him as the lid would part with the eye.

THE THIRTY-FIRST ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF RAMLAH."

The subject of this Assembly has so aptly and succinctly been stated by Mr. Chenery in the summary of the 24 Assemblies not translated by him, that any attempt to improve on him would be presumption. We therefore reproduce here the passage referring to it from his Introduction, p. 76 of Vol. I. The Thirty-first Assembly, he says, is a composition of exquisite beauty. Hârith makes the pilgrimage to Mecca, and there finds Abû Zayd, who addresses the worshippers first in the usual rhymed prose, and then in verse, on the duties of true religion. The Hajj, he tells them, does not consist in hastening on camels to the holy city, or wearying the body, or parting from home and children, but in adding to these performances abstinence from sin, purity of intention, and the practice of virtue, for "washing in fonts cleanses not from immersion in sins, the baring of the body compensates not for the laying up of guilt, nor will the donning of the pilgrim's garb avail him who clothes himself with the forbidden." The verses which follow are inspired by the loftiest morality. When he has concluded, Hârith approaches him, but Abû Zayd declares that he has a vow not to associate with anyone during his pilgrimage, nor to make gain, nor to recite his pedigree, nor to ask alms. As the pilgrims pass by on their journey he again addresses them in edifying verse.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: In the prime of my youth and the freshness of vigorous life, I hated making my den in the thickets [towns], and loved slipping out of the scabbard, from my ken, that travel fills the provision bags and produces gain, while cleaving to one's country hamstrings [houghs] the intellect and lowers the Stay-at-home. So I shook the [divining-] arrows of seeking advice and rubbed the fire-sticks of choosing the best, whereupon I made up my mind firmer than rocks, and started towards the shores of Shâm [Syria] for the purpose of trading. Now when I had tented at Ramlah, and thrown down the staff of

travel, I found there montures being made ready for night-faring, and saddles being strapped for [travelling to] the mother of Cities [Mecca]. Then the gale of longing blew strongly within me, and a craving for the holy house seized on me passionately, so that I haltered my camel, and flung from me my engagements and ties,

And said to him who blamed me, "Cut it short, for fain choose I the 'stand' [*maqâm*, the standing-place of Abraham] before the stay,
And spend, what I have gathered, on the gathering-ground [Muzdalifeh], forgetting for the sacred stone the metal cursed."

Then I strung myself together with a travelling-company like the stars of heaven, who in their faring sped with the torrent's rush, and coursed in quest of their good with the course of the race-horse. So, between night-journeying and journeying by day, between trotting and ambling, we abated not, until the legs of our beasts had done us rare service, in bringing us to Juḥfah [the station where the pilgrims from Syria assembled, before setting out for the general meeting-place, Muzdalifeh, next to Mecca]. Then we alighted therein, making ready for donning the pilgrim's cloak, and wishing each other joy in having attained to our desire. But no sooner had we made kneel our beasts in the place, and laid down the saddle-bags, when there came in sight of us from amongst the mountains a person, exposed [bare] of skin, and who cried out: "O ye people of this concourse, hither with you to th t which rescues on the day of the mutual call [*tanâdî*]." Then the pilgrims hastened towards him, and gathered and surrounded him and waxed silent, and when he

saw their propping up to him, and their eagerness to feed on his discourse, he ascended one of the mounds, then he hawked, opening up his speech, and said: "O ye company of pilgrims, flocking together from the mountain-paths, do you comprehend what you are about to face and whom you go to meet? Or do you know whom you approach, and what you are undertaking boldly? Do you imagine that Hajj is (means) the choosing of saddle-beasts and the traversing of stations, the taking seat in litters, and the loading of beasts of burden? Or do you opine that piety is the tucking up of sleeves, and the emaciating of bodies, the separation from children and the getting far from your native places? Ay no, by Allah, but it is the shunning of transgressions before preparing the beast, the sincerity of purpose in making for yonder building, and the purity of submissiveness along with the fervour of devotion, the mending of dealings, before working the doughty camels. By Him who prescribed the rites for the devout, and guides astraight the wanderer in the raven-black night, the washing with bucketfuls cleanseth not from being immersed in [the mire of] sin, and the stripping of bodies counterbalances not for being loaden with crime, nor makes the donning of the pilgrim's cloak amends for being wrapped up in the forbidden. The being plaided with the Izâr profits not, when one is burdened with iniquities, nor avails the seeking of approach [to God] by getting one's head shaved when one busies himself in shaving mankind. Obsequiousness in clipping the hair (after completion of the pilgrimage) rubs not off the dirt of persistency in shortcomings. None prospers [by visiting mount]

'Arafât, but he who is endowed with wisdom, nor is any blessed [hallowed] by Al Khayf, who is addicted to injustice. None witnesses the standing place [of Abraham], but he who stands upright, and he rejoices not in the acceptance of his pilgrimage who swerves from the right path. So have Allah mercy upon the man who is sincere [pure], before his running to [mount] Ṣafâ, and treads the road of the divine pleasure, before his repairing to the tanks [of the well Zamzam]; who puts off his dissimulation before doffing his garments, and excels in his beneficence, before his rushing down from 'Arafât." Then he raised his shrill note with a voice to make hear the deaf, and wellnigh shaking the mountain-peaks, and indited:

"The Hajj is not thy travelling by day and night, and thy selecting camels and camel-litters,

The Hajj is that thou repair to the holy house for the sake of Ḥajj, not that thou accomplish thy wants thereby.

That thou bestride the back of righteousness, taking the check of lust for guide, and truth for high-road.

That thou bestow what has been given thee while in thy power, to him who in his need tenders his hand towards thy gift.

A pilgrimage with all this fraught is perfect, but if the Ḥajj is void thereof it proves abortive.

For a losing-bargain of dissemblers it suffices that they plant and reap not, having met with toil and exile,

And that they go without reward or praise, giving their fame a bait to hi who censures and lampoons.

Seek then, dear brother, in what sacrifice thou mayest offer up, the face of God, the guardian, going in and out.

For lo, no hidden deed shall remain hidden from the Compassionate, whether the servant be sincere or shamming,

And steal a march on death by good deeds sent afore: death's sudden summons, when it comes, is not put off;

And use humility in frame of mind, such as the nights can, in their turns, not alter, though a crown they gave thee.

And watch not every cloud whose lightning flasheth, though it appear to pour a rain of copious shower.

Not every caller merits to be heard, how many a whisperer shouted fatal news,

And none is wise but he who contents him with a morsel, that makes life's days to folden by degrees;

For every mickle comes to be a mite, and meek grows every stiff-necked, rage he as he may!"

Said the narrator: Now, when he had fructified the barrenness of our understandings with the witchcraft of his say, I sniffed the breeze of Abû Zayd, and delight made me incline to him with what a thrill of affection. But I kept still until he had completed the expounding of his wisdom, and came down from his hillock, when I slipped towards him, so that I might scan the traits of his countenance, and descry the nature of his accomplishments. And lo, it was the stray for whom I had searched, and the threader of the pearl-strings that he had displayed. Then I clung to him with the clinging of the Lâm to the Alif, and ranked him as recovery is ranked with the sick, and I asked him to join me, but he refused, or to poise me [on my camel], but he declined, saying: "I have made oath in this my pilgrimage, that I would neither ride together nor alternately with any one, neither make gain nor boast of pedigree, neither seek profit, nor companionship, nor else accommodate myself to him who dissembles." Then he went in haste, and left me wailing, while I ceased not to shelter him in my sight (hoping for his return), nay, would have loved him to walk on the pupil of my eye, until he had climbed up one of the mountains, and stood watching the pilgrims, and when he witnessed the riders faring onward over the sand-hills, he made hand fall upon hand, and broke forth inditing:

"He who visits on the back of beasts is not like him who runs on foot,

No, nor is the servant who obeys like him who riots amongst servants.

How, O people, should the toil be like, of him who builds and who pulls down?

Sinners soon will have to call the mourning-women of repentance,

While the seeker of approach to God says, "Hail to him who has done service."

Send then forward, I beseech thee, soul, deeds of acceptance with the Lord of old,

Scorn the tinsel of this earthly life, for its existence is but naught,

And remind thee of the throw of death, when unawares his stroke befalls,

And bewail thy work of shame, forth shedding tears of blood for it,

Curing it with sore repentance, before the hide all through is rotten.

May then be, that Allah guard thee, against the fire that blazes fiercely,

On the day when sin is cancelled no more, tardy repentance vain."

Then he sheathed the blade of his tongue, and went on his way. But I ceased not, in every water-station that we came to, and every night-camp where we pillowed, to search for him, but failed, and to ask people to help me seeking him, but they found him not, until I fancied that the Jinn had snatched him up or the earth had cut him off. And never in my peregrinations suffered I a grief like this, nor was I in any travel tried with its like of sorrow.

THE THIRTY-SECOND ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF ṬAYBEH."

This is one of the most elaborate and important, as well as of the longest and most difficult of the Assemblies. Hârith has completed the ceremonies of the Pilgrimage to Mecca, and intends to follow it up by the visitation of Mohammed's tomb at Ṭaybeh, one of the names given to Medina. On his road he meets in the ho estead of one of the intermediate Arab tribes Abû Zayd, who this time has assumed the character of a mufti or jurisconsult and adept in the sacred and secular law of Islâm. A large gathering of people has collected around him, whose spokesman proposes to him a hundred questions on various canonical and legal points, as the religious obligations of ceremonial ablution, prayer, fast, almsgiving, pilgrimage, on buying and selling, the duties of magistrates towards orphans or weak-minded persons, on principles of moral conduct, and so on—questions which are calculated to exhibit Abû Zayd at the same time as learned in the law and in the rarest idioms of the Arabic tongue. For his answers, while startling the ordinary hearer by being the opposite of what would be expected, prove perfectly correct, if the leading word be taken in a certain more recondite sense. For instance the question is: "May a woman be rebuked for being bashful?" to which Abû Zayd, no doubt to Mrs. Grundy's horror, replies "To be sure," because he gives to the verbal noun *khajal*, in everyday parlance "being ashamed or bashful," the rarer meaning of "being overbearing when in possession of riches," in support of which Harîri quotes a remarkable saying of Mohammed, recorded in the Traditions. As Chenery (vol. i., p. 78) appositely observes, similar puzzles were not unknown in Europe, as the question: "Num peccatum est occidere patrem suum," where not "one's own father," but "the father of swine," is meant. Ḥarîri has not given the interpretation of the ambiguous terms as an integral part of the text, but inserted it in parenthesis after each question, and with the help of these explanations, which, in case of need, we have supplemented with a few additional remarks, the reader will find no difficulty in following the general drift of the Assembly. If some of the questions appear childish, he must remember that Harîri, while satisfying to the fullest extent the taste of his countrymen for the discussion of grammatical, rhetorical, and religious points of controversy, raises himself with a fine touch of irony above it, where such discussions degenerate into mere quibbles.

But for the most part, we feel confident the reader will be amused and interested, and as a study on the synonyms and idioms of the Arabic Language the Assembly is invaluable.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: At one time when I had completed the rites of the Ḥajj and absolved the duties of [the shout] *labbaika*, and the outpour of the blood of the sacrifice, I resolved to make for Ṭaybeh, with a travelling company of the Benû Shaibah, to visit the tomb of the Prophet, the Elected, and to disengage myself from the tribe of those "who perform the Ḥajj and neglect him (Mohammed)." Now it was rumoured that the roads were unsafe and the Arabs of the two sanctuaries at war. So I was bewildered between fear that made me lag, and longing that stirred me on, until submissiveness was infused into my heart, and the predominance of [my desire for] the visiting of him upon whom be peace. Therefore, after having chosen my beast, and made ready my travelling-gear, I journeyed along with my companions without inclining to any halt, or remissness in faring on day and night, till we came to the Benû Ḥarb, who had just returned from the war. Then we made up our minds to pass the length of the day in the encampment of the people, and while we were selecting a place for making kneel down our camels, and spying for the watering-pond, and a cool drink, lo, we saw them running as if they were flocking to some idol. So their swarming roused our suspicions, and we asked what was the matter with them. Then we were told that a learned legist of the Arabs was present in their assembly, and that this was the reason of their turmoil. Said I to my company: "Halloo! let us witness the gathering of the clan, so

as to learn clearly to distinguish the right from the wrong." Thereupon they said: "Truly, what thou proposest is worth hearing, and thou hast given good advice without stint." Accordingly we rose to follow our guide and repair to the assembly, until, when we came near it, and stretched our necks to see the legist to whom they had crowded, I found him to be Abû Zayd, the father of lies and tricks, and of mischief and choice rhymes. He had donned the turban in the orthodox fashion and gathered his garment in proper style, and was sitting crosswise, while the great ones of the clan surrounded him, and their medley enwrapped him from all sides. Presently he said to them: "Put questions to me on the points of intricacy, and let me explain to you all difficulties, for by Him who created the heavens, and taught Adam the names [of all things], I am the legist of the Arabs of the Arabians, and the most learned of those that live under the star-pocked sky." Then there stalked up to him a man glib of tongue, stout of heart, saying: "Know, that I have had converse with the legists of the world to the effect that I have selected from them a hundred decisions, and if thou be of those who loathe the daughters of others (meaning lies, untruth, falsehood), and desire from us sound food, then listen and answer, so that thou mayest get thee thy due. He replied: "God is greatest (Allah akbar), the truth will become evident, and the hidden be disclosed, so say what thou art bidden." He said: "What sayest thou with regard to him, who has made an ablution (*wuẓû*), and afterwards touched the backside of his shoe?" He replied: "His ablution is invalidated by his doing so" (*na'l*,

shoe, and also "wife"). He said: "And when he has made an ablution, and afterwards the cold has thrown him on his side?" He replied: "Then let him renew his ablution" (*al-bard*, cold, and also "sleep"). He said: "May one who makes an ablution rub with his hands his testicles?" He replied: "He is invited to do so, but it is not made obligatory on him" (*unṣai*, the two testicles, and also "both ears"). He said: "Is it allowed to make ablution with that which the serpent emits?" He replied: "And is there anything cleaner than it for the Arabs?" (*ṣu'bân*, a large serpent, and also pl. of *ṣa'b*, "water-course in a valley, river"). He said: "Is the water [fetched by the hands of] a blind man lawful?" He replied: "Yea, and let that of the seeing man be avoided" (*ẓarîr*, the word translated with blind man, in whose case the water fetched by him would not be lawful for ablution, because he cannot know whether it is pure or not, means also "river-side," against the water of which there is no objection. On the other hand *al-baṣîr*, the seeing man, means also "dog," and in their case the reverse would hold good: the water fetched by the former is chosen with discernment, and therefore not to be avoided, while "the water of the dog" would be the height of abomination). He said: "Is washing (*ghusl*) incumbent upon him who has lost sperm?" He replied: "Nay, even if he does so a second time" (*amnâ*, he lost or emitted sperm, and also "he went to Miná," the sacred valley near Mecca). He said: "Is it then incumbent on one polluted by seminal loss to wash his fur-coat?" He replied: "To be sure, and also his needle" (*al-farwah*, fur-coat, means also "skin of the

head," and *al-ibrah*, needle, has moreover the signification "bone of the elbow"). He said: "Is circumambulation in the spring permitted?" He replied: "This is abominated on account of the execrable occurrence" (*tuṭawwuf*, circumambulation, means also "easing nature," and *ar-rabî'*, spring, early vegetation, signifies also "streamlet," the defilement of which would be a hideous crime). He said: "Is the washing of his book incumbent on him?' He replied: "Yea, and also of his lip" (*aṣ-ṣaḥîfah*, book, and also "lines of the face"). He said: "How is it then, if he fails to wash his hatchet?" He replied: "It is as though he neglected to wash his head" (*al-fa's*, hatchet, and also "bone of the occiput"). He said: "Is it allowed to wash in a wallet?" He replied: "It is like washing in wells" (*jirâb*, a leather bag, and also "the inside of a well"). He said: "And what sayest thou with regard to one who has used sand for his ablution, and afterwards sees gardens?" He replied: "His rubbing with sand is void, and he has to make his ablution afresh" (*rauz*, pl. of *rauẓah*, garden, and also "a small quantity of water remaining in a cistern"). He said: "Is it allowed that a man should make his prostration upon ordure?" He replied: "Yea, and let him avoid the dirty one" (*'aẓirah*, human excrement, and also "a courtyard"). He said: "Is it then permitted to make prostration upon [the wood of] a Khilâf [-tree]?" He replied: "Nay, nor either on the edges of his garments" (*khilâf*, the *ṣafṣâf* or poplar-tree, on which prostration is not forbidden, and also "sleeve," on which a man is not allowed to make his prostration, as little as on his *aṭrâf*, in the sense of edges of a garment

in the text, while if the word is taken in the meaning of "extremities of the body, hands, and feet," the prostration upon them is in accordance with the tradition: "I was commanded to prostrate myself on seven bones," namely, the two feet, the two knees, the two fore-arms, and the forehead). He said: "What then if he make prostration on his left?" He replied: "There is no harm in his doing so" (*shimâl*, the left side, and also pl. of *shimlah*, "cloak enveloping the whole body"). He said: "Is it then allowed to make prostration on trotters?" He replied: "Yea, with exception of the fore-arms" (*al-kurâ'*, here translated with trotters, means that part in cattle which corresponds to the pastern of a horse, which as part of a dead animal would be considered unclean, but at the same time the word means "a projecting piece of stony ground or rock," on which prostration might take place, unless it serves to ease the fore-arms). He said: "Is it allowed that one should pray upon a dog's head?" He replied: "Yea, as well as upon all other high places" (*râs al-kalb*, dog's head, is apart from its literal meaning the name of a well-known mountain-cliff). He said: "Is it lawful for a student to carry copies of the Koran?" He replied: "Nay, nor to carry them in wrappers" (*dâris*, a student, and also "a menstruous woman"). He said: "And what sayest thou with regard to him who prays while the hair of his pubes appears?" He replied: "His pr yer is lawful" (*al-'ânah*, hair round the pudenda, and also "herd of asses," in connection with which latter meaning the word *bârizah* would have to be translated in its literal meaning of coming out or sallying forth).

He said: "How then if he has said prayer while [the obligation of] a fast was on him?" He replied: "He must reiterate it, and if he has prayed a hundred days" (*saum*, fasting, and also "excrement dropped by an ostrich"). He said: "But if he has carried a puppy while praying?" He replied: "It is as if he had carried beans" (*jirw*, the young of a dog, and also small cucumbers, pomegranates, or similar fruit). He said: "Is the prayer of one who carries a hernia with him sound?" He replied: "Nay, and if he had been praying on [the holy] mount Marwah" (*garwah*, a rupture, and also "the vessel from which a dog drinks"). He said: "How then if on the garment of one praying any bodily excretion has fallen?" He replied: "His prayer takes effect, and no doubt" (*najw* is a general term for anything coming out of the belly, and therefore considered ceremonially impure, but it means also "a pouring cloud," the drops of which fallen on a man would not invalidate his prayer). He said: "Is it allowed that one covered with a woman's veil should lead a man in prayer?" He replied: "Yea, and also one in armour may lead him" (*muqunna'*, one who wears the female veil *miqnâ'*, implying that women are unfit to be Imâms, and also "covered with a helmet"). He said: "But what if one has led them in whose hand there is an object of a pious donation?" He replied: "They will have to begin afresh, and if they were a thousand" (*waqf*, any object consecrated to pious purposes, and also "a bracelet of ivory or tortoise-shell," in the latter sense indicating that a wearer of such, *i.e.*, a woman, is excluded from the Imâmship). He said: "What then if one has led

them whose thigh is visible?" He replied: "His prayer and theirs is efficacious" (*fakhizuhu bâdiyah* [a man] whose thigh is bare, and also "whose tribal division or kindred are desert Arabs." Ḥarîri remarks that some Lexicographers prefer in the latter meaning the reading *fakhz*, instead of *fakhiz*, for the sake of distinction). He said: "But if the hornless bullock has led them?" He replied: "Say thy prayer, and no woe betide thee" (*aṣ-ṣaur al-ajamm*, a bullock without horns, and also "a lord or prince without a spear"). He said: "Can the prayer of the witness be curtailed or shortened?" He replied: "Nay, by the Invisible, the All-seeing" (*ṣalât-ash-shâhid*, the prayer of the witness, here meaning especially the blood-witness or martyr in religious warfare, and also "the prayer of sunset," so called because it coincides with the rising of the stars, to which the name *shâhid* is given). He said: "Is it allowed for the excused to break fast in the month of Ramadân?" He replied: "It is not permitted except to little children" (*ma'zûr*, or *mu'azzar*, excused, and also "circumcised"). He said: "Is it then open to one who brings home his bride to eat therein?" He replied: "Yea, to the fill of his mouth" (*al-mu'arris*, one bringing home a bride, and also "a traveller who takes a short rest at the end of night and presently continues his journey"). He said: "But what if therein the naked break their fast?" He replied: "The authorities gainsay them not" (*al-'urât*, pl. of *'ârî*, the naked, and also irr. pl. of *muârrawin*, "seized by an ague," *'urawâ'*). He said: "And if the faster eat on entering the morning?" He replied: "This is the more circumspect and safer for him"

(*aṣbaḥ*, he has entered on the morning, and also "he has lighted a lamp, *miṣbâḥ*"). He said: "What then if he venture on eating at night?" He replied: "Let him be prepared to receive judgment" (*lail-an*, adverbial accusative, at night, and also acc. of *lail*, meaning according to Ibn Dorayd "the young of a bustard," and according to others "that of the partridge or the crane"). He said: "And how when he eats before the fair one has withdrawn from sight?" He replied: "Judgment, by Allah [The punishment of the law], is due on him" (*al-baiẓâ'*, woman, wife, and also "sun"). He said: "But if the faster provokes vomiting (by taking an emetic)?" He replied: "He has broken his fast, by Him who has made the chase lawful" (*al-kaid*, violent anger, and also "vomiting," to produce which the breaking of the fast is permitted, while the provoking of anger has nothing to do with it). He said: "Is it open to him to break the fast if the cook clings to him?" He replied: "Yea, but not the cook who dresses the food in the kitchen" (*ṭâbikh*, cook, and also "a hot fever"). He said: "What then if a woman have laughed during her fast?" He replied: "The fasting of that day is invalidated for her" (*ẓaḥikat*, she laughed, and also "she became menstruous," as in Koran, xi. 74: "and she became menstruous and we announced Isaac to her"). He said: "But if small-pox appears on her fellow-wife?" He replied: "Let her break the fast, if she has made known her ailment" (*ẓarrah*, a fellow or rival wife, whose sickness would not dispense the former from fasting, and also "the root of the thumb or of the teat," which is understood in Abû Zayd's answer). He said: "What is due in

legal alms (*zakât*) for a hundred lamps?" He replied: "Two full-grown mature she-camels, O my friend" (*miṣbâḥ*, a lamp, and also a she-camel that rises at day-break from her resting-place, to go to the pasturing ground). He replied: "But if one owns ten daggers?" He replied: "Let him bring out two sheep without grumbling" (*khanâjir*, pl. of *khanjar*, a dagger, or long knife, and also of *khanjar*, or *khanjûr*, "a camel rich in milk"). He said: "But if he give over to the slanderer (informer) the best of his kindred?" He replied: "Ay, happy tidings to him on the day of resurrection" (*namîmah*, the foremost of one's relations, and also "the choicest part of one's property"; *sâ'î*, an informer, or slanderer, and also "the collector of the *zakât*"). He said: "Is it that the bearers of sins [burdens] deserve a share in the legal alms?" He replied: "Yea, if they be engaged in warfare for the faith" (*auzâr*, pl. of *wizr*, sins, burdens, and also "arms, weapons"). He said: "Is it allowed to the Ḥâjj (pilgrim) to perform the *'umrah* (ceremonies of the lesser pilgrimage)?" He replied: "Nay, nor that he put on a veil" (*ya'tamir*, he performs the *'umrah*, and also "he puts on the *'imâmah*," a kind of head-gear or turban). He said: "Is it then open to him to kill a brave one?" He replied: "Yea, as he may kill a wild beast" (*shujâ'*, a valiant man, and also "a kind of serpent"). He said: "But what about him who has killed a female flutist in the Ḥarem?" He replied: "On him is due the sacrifice of some head of cattle" (*zammârah*, a female player on the *mizmâr*, flute, or pipe, and also an ostrich, whose cry is called *zimmâr*; *ḥaram*, the harem, and also "the sacred precinct of Mecca"). He said: "But when he has

thrown [his lance] at the leg of a free man and killed him?" He replied: "Let him bring out a sheep in compensation for it" (*sâq*, a leg, *ḥurr*, a free-man; *ṣâqu ḥurrin*, "the male of the turtle-dove"). He said: "How then if he has killed the mother of 'Auf after donning the pilgrim-cloak?" He replied: "Let him give in alms a small quantity of food" (*umm 'Auf*, name of a woman by her son, and also "a locust"). He said: "Is it incumbent upon the Ḥâjj to be provided with a boat?" He replied: "Yea, so that he may lead them to the watering-places" (*qârib*, a kind of boat, and also "a seeker of water at night-time"). He said: "And what sayest thou about the lawless after the Sabbath?" He replied: "He has done what is lawful at that time" (*ḥarâm*, unlawful, opp. to *ḥalâl*, lawful, and also "one who dons the pilgrim-cloak, a pilgrim"; *sabt*, Sabbath, and also "shaving of the head"; *ḥall*, "he has doffed the cloak," which, of course, is a lawful action after the pilgrimage is completed). He said: "But what sayest thou with regard to the sale of a bay?" He replied: "It is unlawful, as the sale of a dead body" (*kumait*, a bay horse, and also "red wine"). He said: "Is it allowed to sell [barter] vinegar for the flesh of the camel?" He said: "Not either for the flesh of sheep" (*khall*, vinegar, and also a camel two years old, or the young of a pregnant camel, the sale of a living animal for flesh, whether of the same kind or any other being unlawful). He said: "Is the sale of a present lawful?" He said: "Nay, nor that of wine" (*hadiyyah*, a present, and also an animal being led to the Ka'beh for sacrifice; *sabiyyah*, a female slave taken from the infidels, and also "wine"). He said: "What sayest thou with regard

to the sale of a cornelian stone (or of the hair of a new-born)?" He said: "It is forbidden, in truth" (*'aqîqah*, a single cornelian stone; the first wool of an animal, or the hair of a new-born child; but also "an animal sacrificed for a child on the seventh day after its birth"). He said: "Is the sale of (meaning on the part of) a crier to a herd's man allowed?" He replied: "Nay, nor to a collector of the zakât" (*dâ'î*, one who calls, or makes proclamation, and also "the remainder of milk in the udder," which it is as unlawful to sell as the fœtus of an animal in the womb). He said: "May a hawk be sold for dates?" He replied: "Nay, by the Lord of creation and command" (*ṣaqar*, a hawk, and also "date-sugar"). He said: "May a Moslem buy the plunder [taken] from Moslem women?" He replied: "Yea, and it may be inherited from him, when he has died" (*salab*, plunder, booty, and also the bark of a tree, and "leaf or blade of the plant *ṣumâm*"). He said: "But is it allowed that the intercessor be sold?" He replied: "What is there to hinder it?" (*shâfi'*, an intercessor, and also "a sheep which one buys to skin it"). He said: "May a pitcher be sold to the Benû Aṣfar?" He replied: "It is abominated as the selling of a helmet [to them]" (*ibrîq*, a pitcher, and also a furbished and well-tempered sword; Benû Aṣfar are the Greeks, to whom, as enemies of Islâm, it would be unlawful to sell weapons of attack or defence). He said: "Is it lawful for a man to sell the colt of his camel born in summer?" He replied: "Nay, but he may sell his friend" (*ṣaifî*, a camel colt born in summer, and also "a son begotten in old age," to which latter meaning Abû Zayd's answer refers; *ṣafî*, a milch camel

yielding a copious flow, and also "a sincere friend," the meaning which would suggest itself most readily to the ordinary hearer). He said: "But if one has bought a slave and a wound appears on his mother?" He said: "There is no sin in returning him" (*umm*, mother, and also "the pia mater of the brain"). He said: "Holds the right of pre-emption good for the co-partner in a field?" He replied: "Nay, nor for the co-partner in a [yellow] she-camel" (*ṣaḥrâ'*, a field, and also "an ass whose white is mingled with grey; *ṣafrâ*, a yellow she-camel, a word which, however, would more readily suggest the word "bile"). He said: "Is it lawful that the water of the well and of an open place should be heated?" He replied: "If they are in deserts, then certainly not" (*yuḥmá*, it is being heated, and also "it is prohibited from general use"; *ḵẖalâ*, an open place, here taken in construction with *mâ'*, water, and also "fodder, both green and dry"). He said: "What sayest thou with regard to the dead body of an infidel (as an article of food)?" He replied: "It is lawful for the dweller in a place and the traveller" (*kâfir*, an infidel, and also "the sea"; *maitah*, dead body, and also "fish floating on the water"). He said: "Is it allowed to offer as a forenoon sacrifice squinting men?" He replied: "This is worthier of acceptance" (*al-ḥûl*, pl. of *aḥwal*, squint-eyed, and also of *ḥâ'il*, "a sheep that has not conceived"). He said: "May then a divorced woman be sacrificed in the forenoon?" He replied: "Yea, and the nightfarer may be treated thereto hospitably" (*aṭ-ṭâliq*, divorced woman, and also "a she-camel allowed to pasture freely"). He said: "How then if one slaughters before the appearance of the gazelle?"

He replied: "It is a sheep whose flesh may be sold (not a sacrifice) undoubtedly" (*al-ghazâlah*, gazelle, and also a name for the rising sun, corresponding to *al-jaunah*, which is a name of the sun when setting, as in the words of the poet: *tabâdara 'l-jaunatu an taghîbâ*, the sun was setting quickly). He said: "Is it lawful to make gain by beating wool (or hammering metals)?" He said: "This is like gambling with dice, there is no difference" (*ṭarq*, beating, hammering, and also "the throwing of pebbles for the purpose of vaticination"). He said: "May one standing say *salâm 'alek* to one sitting?" He replied: "It is forbidden between strangers" (*al-qâ'id*, one who sits, and also "a woman who has ceased being menstruous or copulating." He said: "May a sensible man sleep under a fool?" He said: "How lovely it is to do so in the Baqî'" (*raqî'*, a fool, and also "the sky"; *al-baqî'*, the cemetery of Medina). He said: "Is a Zimmî forbidden to kill an old woman?" He replied: "It is not allowed to oppose him with regard to wine" (*al-'ajûz*, an old woman, and also "old wine," which to kill means to mix it with water [see the Assembly of Tiflîs]). He said: "Is it allowed that a man should remove [secede] from his father's premises?" He replied: "It is not allowed either to one obscure or to a noble of birth" (*'imârah*, building, edifice, and also "tribe"). He said: "What sayest thou with regard to becoming a Jew?" He replied: "This is the key to an ascetic life" (*tahawwud*, turning a Jew, and also "turning to God in repentance," according to the words of the Koran, "behold we have returned to thee"). He said: "What sayest thou with regard to patience in mis-

fortune?" He replied: "What a great sin it is!" (*ṣabr*, patience, and also "tying, fastening, keeping one imprisoned until death ensues"; *baliyyah*, calamity, misfortune, and also "a camel tied to the tomb of her master," and neither watered nor fed until she dies, on which the deceased man was by the Arabs of the ignorance supposed to ride to his doom). He said: "Is it lawful to beat the ambassador?" He replied: "Yea, and also to load therewith the seeker of counsel" (*safîr*, envoy, ambassador, and also "leaves falling from a tree"; *mustashîr*, one who asks advice from another, and also "a fat camel," or "a camel which knows the pregnant from one that has not conceived"). He said: "May a man beat his father?" He replied: "The dutiful does so and refuseth not" (*'azzar*, he chastised, beat violently, and also "he helped, strengthened, honoured," as in Koran, xlviii. 9, "and may assist him and honour him"). He said: "What sayest thou with regard to him who has impoverished his brother?" He replied: "Well done of him, how brotherly he has acted towards him" (*afqar*, he impoverished, and also "he lent a camel to ride upon her back"). He said: "But what if he strips his child of its clothing?" He replied: "On what a handsome thing he has resolved!" (*'arâhu*, he stripped him, and also "he gave him the fruit of a date-tree for a year"). He said: "What then if he bakes his slave on the fire?" He replied: "There is no sin on him, nor any blame" (*al-mamlûk*, a white slave, and also "a dough kneaded repeatedly until it has become consistent"). He said: "Is it allowed for a woman to cut her husband?" (in the Arabic idiom meaning to be undutiful to him). He

replied: "Nobody forbids her doing so" (*ba'l*, a husband, and also "a date-tree," in which sense "cutting" may be taken literally, or in the meaning of "gathering its fruit"). He said: "May then a woman be upbraided for being bashful?" He replied: "Most certainly" (*khajal*, being bashful, blushing, and also "being overbearing in possession of riches," according to the saying of Mohammed to the women: "When ye are hungry ye fawn, and when ye have your fill ye become overbearing"). He said: "What sayest thou with regard to him who has shaved [planed] the tamarisk of his brother?" He replied: "He has sinned even if he has given permission to him" (*naḥata aṣlat-hu*, he shaved his tamarisk, and also "he backbited him and detracted from his honour"). He said: "Is it allowed to the magistrate to appoint a curator for one possessed of a bullock?" He replied: "Yea, to be safe from the mischief of violence" (*saur*, a bullock, and also "madness"). He said: "But is it open to him to strike on the hand of an orphan?" He replied: "Yea, until he is of age" (*zaraba 'alá yadi-hi*, besides having the literal meaning given above, is an idiom for: "he appointed a curator for him"). He said: "Is it then allowed to him to take for the same (an orphan) a suburban place?" He replied: "Nay, even if he consents to it" (*rabẓ*, buildings outside the walls of a city, and also "a wife"). He said: "But when may he (the magistrate) sell the body of an idiot?" He replied: "Whenever he sees that it pleases him" (*badan*, body, and also "a short armour"). He said: "Is it then allowed that he buy for him jakes?" He replied: "Yea, if they be not haunted" (*ḥashsh*, a privy, and also "a palm-planta-

tion"). He said: "Is it allowed that the magistrate be an oppressor?" He replied: "Yea, if he be knowing" (*zâlim*, one who oppresses, and also "one who drinks milk before it curdles"). He said: "Is one fit to become a Kadi who has no perspicacity?" He replied: "Yea, if his conduct be fair" (*baṣîrah*, sharpsightedness, sagacity, and also "a shield"). He said: "But if he is bare of intellect?" He replied: "This is an indication [the title-page] of excellence" (*'aql*, intellect, wisdom, and also "embroidered silk stuff"). He said: "But if he have the pride of a tyrant?" He replied: "There is nothing to be said against or to make much of" (*zahw*, pride, and also "a date which begins to colour"; *jabbâr*, a tyrant. a shedder of blood, and also "a high palm-tree whose fruit is out of the reach of the hand," opposed to *qâ'id*). He said: "Is it allowed that the witness be a suspected character?" He replied: "Yea, if he be a sensible man" (*murîb*, suspected, exposed to doubt, and also "one who has plenty of curdled milk"). He said: "But when it has transpired that he has committed sodomy?" He replied: "He is like one who has tailored" (*lâṭ*, he committed the sin of the people of Lot, and also "he coated a well with clay"). He said: "And if it comes out that he has been winnowing?" He replied: "Let his evidence be refused, and not accepted" (*gharbal*, he sifted corn, and also "he killed," as the poet says in the metre rejez: "Thou wilt see the kings slain around him." The word has also an obscene meaning). He said: "But if it has become manifest that he is a liar?" He replied: "That is for him a quality which adorns him" (*mân, yamîn*, he lied, and also, with aor. *yamûn*,

"he provided for his family"). He said: "What is incumbent upon a servant of God?" He replied: "Let him make oath by the God of creation" (*'âbid al-ḥaqq*, a servant of God, and also "one who gainsays the true belief," as some commentators explain the word in Koran, xliii. 81). He said: "And what sayest thou with regard to him who has deliberately gouged the eye of a nightingale?" "Let his eye be gouged, to make the speech short" (*bulbul*, a nightingale, and also "a spare man"). He said: "But if he has wounded the Ḳaṭa (bird) of a woman and death ensued?" He said: "Soul for soul, if it has gone" (*qaṭa'*, sandgrouse, and also "what lies between the hip-bones"). He said: "But if a pregnant woman has dropped her fœtus in consequence of his blow?" He replied: "Let him atone for his sin by the manumission of a slave" (*ḥashîsh*, grass, green herbs, etc., and also "a fœtus dropped in abortion"). He said: "What is due in law to one who keeps himself secluded?" He replied: "To have his extremities cut off for the sake of determent" (*mukhtafî*, one who sticks to a place without leaving it, and also "a spoiler of tombs, a stripper of grave-clothes"). He said: "What then is to be done to him who has stolen the snakes of the house?" He replied: "Let his right hand be cut off, if they are worth the fourth part of a denar" (*asâwid*, pl. of *aswad*, snakes, and also "household utensils, as a washing-tub, kettle, dish," etc.). He said: "But if he have stolen a great worth [value] of gold?" He replied: "There is no amputation as though he had committed a violent robbery" (*ṣamîn*, what is precious, valuable, and also "the eighth part," as *naṣîf* is used for *niṣf*, half, *sadîs*

for *suds*, sixth part, etc. ; under gold is in this case to be understood a gold coin). He said : "What then if theft is brought home to a woman ?" He replied : "There is no guilt upon her, and she has nothing to fear" (*saraq*, theft, and also "white silk"). He said : "Is a marriage contract valid, which is not witnessed by starlings ?" He replied : "Nay, by the Creator, the Maker" (*qawârî*, pl. of *qâriyah*, a bird of the starling kind, from which the Arabs take a lucky augury, especially with regard to rain, and also "witnesses," because they follow up matters, from *qará*, he followed up). He said : "What sayest thou with regard to a bride who has passed the first night of a month, and then has been returned early in the morning to her previous state ?" He replied : "Half of the dowry is due to her, and the days of probation for divorce (*'iddah*) are not incumbent on her" (*lailah ḥurrah*, the first night of a month, and also "a wedding night in which no consummation has taken place"). Then the asker of the questions said to him : "Allah has blessed thee with the fulness of a sea that he who draws from it lessens it not, and of a man of learning to whose praise the praiser reaches not." Thereupon he looked down with the downward look of the abashed, and stopped silent with the silence of the tongue-tied. Said to him Abû Zayd : "Go on, Sirrah, how long then [wilt thou tarry], how long ?" He replied : "There remains no missile in my quiver, and after the breaking forth of thy morn there is no scope left for debate : by Allah then, the son of what country art thou, and how beautiful was that which thou hast

expounded." Forthwith he indited with a glib tongue and a powerful voice :

"In the world I am a pattern, point of sight [Ḳiblah] for folk of wisdom,
Save that all my days I pass in tardy rest and early outset,
And the stranger, though in Eden he alight, is like one homeless."

Then he said : "O Allah, as Thou hast made us of the number of those who are guided so that they may guide others, make us also of the number of those who follow the right way and spend." Thereupon the people brought him a drove of camels together with a singing girl, and begged him to visit them while after while. Then he rose to go, making them longing for his return, and carrying off the slave-girl and the drove. Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm : Thereupon I accosted him, and said : "I know thee a rogue, since when then hast thou become a legist ?" He kept twisting about a little while and then he indited, saying :

"I alter my coat to the whims of each moment and mix with its changes of welfare and ill-fare,
And pledge my companion in converse with all that may flatter his humour to please my companion,
With tellers of tales circulating narrations, with drinkers of wine circulating the goblets.
Now making the tears by my sermon to pour down, now cheering the hearts by my jocular sallies,
And feasting the ears, if but op'ning my mouth, by spell of my speech that will meeken the restive,
And if I a minded my hand makes the pen drop a shower of pearls to adorn many volumes.
How many a subtlety dim as Soha that came to be bright as a sun by my clearing,
How many my sayings that captivate hearts, and leave in the hearer a yearning behind them,
And virgin Ḳaṣîdehs indited by me, that met with applause loud expressed and enduring.

Yet plotting of fortune has singled me out, a plotting surpassing that Tir'aun's 'gainst Moses,

And kindles against me a war day by day, I tread through its blaze on a furnace, a furnace!

And strikes me with ills, such as melt a man's vigour, and blanch people's heads with the whiteness of hoar-frost.

And brings to me near but the alien, the hateful, while banishing from me the nearest, the dearest!

And were it not but for the vileness of fortune my lot in the world were not vile, by its fell feud."

Then I said to him: "Soothe thy sorrows and blame not fortune, but be thankful to Him who has turned thee from the way of Iblîs to the way of Idrîs" (Ash-Shâfi'î). He replied: "Leave off idle talk, and tear no veils, but rise with us to make for the Masjid of Yathrib (Medina), haply we may cleanse away by the visitation the filth of our sins." So I said: "Far be it that I fare with thee, before I learn thy explanation." He replied: "By Allah, thou hast imposed duties upon me, and when thou hast asked, thou hast asked but a small matter; listen then to what remedies the mind, and removes ambiguity." Then after he had made clear to me the enigmatical and lifted from me my perplexity, we tightened our saddles, and I fared on, and he fared on, while he ceased not from his nightly talk as long as the journey lasted, on such topics that made me forget hardship and I would have liked with him "the distance to be long" (allusion to Koran, ix. 42, "but the distance seemed long to them," referring to those who were called upon to join in the expedition to Tâbûk), until when we had reached the city of the Prophet, and obtained our desire from the visitation, he set out Syriawards, and I towards 'Irâk, he veered to the West, and I to the East.

THE THIRTY-THIRD ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF TIFLIS."

In this Assembly Abû Zayd presents himself in the guise of a mendicant, afflicted with a paralytical contortion of the face, before a congregation in Tiflis, whom Hârith had joined in the performance of the appointed prayers, and he obtains by an eloquent appeal to their commiseration, in rhymed prose and verse, a liberal supply of alms from the captivated audience. Hârith follows him, when he departs with his prey, and after having reached a secluded spot, Abû Zayd laughingly throws off his palsy and reveals his identity, anticipating the rebukes of his indignant friend with his usual frank avowal, that his necessity makes for him the law, if lawful means will not provide for his necessity. Yielding to the spell of his fascinating personality, Ḥârith accompanies him in his travels during two years, after the lapse of which he regrets that circumstances enforced their separation.

I had covenanted with Allah, be He exalted, since I was of the age of about a score, that I would not delay prayer as far as it was in my power, so that with my roaming in deserts, and in spite of the sport of leisure-hours, I kept the stated times of prayer and guarded myself from the sin of letting them slip by, and when I joined in a journey, and alighted in any place, I welcomed the summoner to it, and took pattern from him, who observed it religiously. Now it happened at a time when I had come to Tiflis, that I prayed together with a number of poorly-off people, and when we had finished prayer, and were about to go, there sallied forth an old man, with a face plainly contorted by palsy, worn of garments and strength, who said: "I conjure him, who has been made of the clay of liberality, and suckled of the milk of good fellowship, that he but spare me a moment's hurrying, and listen

to a few words from me, whereafter the choice belongs to him, and it rests with his hand to spend or refuse." Then the people fastened their hoops to him [locked their knees together to him], and sat still like the hillocks. Now when he perceived how nicely they kept silent and how considerate they showed themselves in their demeanour [deportment] he said: "O ye, endowed with eyes clear of sight, and visions bright of perception, does not eye-witnessing dispense with hearsay? and does not the smoke tell of the fire? Hoariness is apparent, and weakness oppressive, and disease manifest, and the inward state thus laid bare. Yet erewhile I was one of those who possess and bestow, who exercise authority and rule, who grant help and gifts, who assist and assault. But calamities ceased not to subvert, nor vicissitudes to take away scrap by scrap, till the nest was despoiled and the palm empty, privation became my raiment and bitterness my life-stay, my little ones whined from hunger and craved for the sucking of a date-stone. Yet withal I came not to stand in this place of ignominy and to disclose to you things [to be] hidden, but after I had suffered and was palsy-stricken, and had waxed grey from all I met with, and, oh! would that I had not been spared!" Then he sighed the sigh of the sorrowful, and indited with a feeble voice:

"I cry to the Compassionate, be praise to Him, for fortune's fickleness and hostile rancour

And for calamities that have shattered my rock, and overthrown my frame and its foundations,

Have broken down my ste , and woe to him, whose boughs adversities pull down and break.

My dwelling they have wasted even as to banish from the wasted spot the rats the selves;

They left me bewildered and dazed, to bear the brunt of poverty and all its pangs,

While heretofore I was a lord of wealth, who trailed his sleeves along in luxury,

Whose leaves the supplicants beat freely down, whose hospitable fires night-farers praised;

But who is now, as though the world, that casts the evil eye on him, had never smiled on him,

From whom he turns who was his visitor, and whom he scorns to know who sought his gift.

So if a good man mourns the evil plight he sees an old man in, betrayed by fortune,

Then let him ease the sorrow that afflicts him, and mend the state that puts him thus to shame."

Said the narrator: Now the company inclined to ascertain his condition, so as to find out what he might have concealed, and to sift the truth of his affair. So they said to him: "We know by this time the excellence of thy degree, and the abundance of thy rain-cloud, but make now known to us the tree of thy branch, and withdraw the veil from thy descent." Then he showed himself averse with the reluctancy of one whom misfortunes have befallen or to whom the tidings of daughters [born to him] have been brought, and he indited with emphatic utterance, although in a low voice:

"By thy life, I assure thee, not showeth the branch by the zest of its fruit from what root it has sprung,

So eat what is sweet, when it cometh to hand, and ask not the honey where swarmeth the bee!

And learn to discern, when thou pressest thy grapes, the must of thy press from the acid it yields,

That by testing thou value the costly and cheap, to buy and to sell all things by their likes;

For blame would accrue to the witty, the wise, if error of judgment were fastened on hi ."

Then the people were roused by his sagacity and subtleness, and beguiled by the beauty of his delivery, along with his disease, so that they collected for him the hidden treasures of their belts and whatever was secreted in their breast-pockets, saying to him: "Thou hast drifted to a shallow well and repaired to an empty hive; so take this trifle [pittance] and reckon it neither a miss nor a hit." Then he made much of their little, and accompanied its acceptance with thanks, whereupon he turned away, dragging half his body, and made off, stumbling on his road. Said the narrator of this tale: Now the fancy struck me, that he had disguised his appearance, and shammed in his gait, so I rose to thread his path and to track his traces, while he glanced at me askance and gave me a wide berth, until, when the road was clear and identification [the disclosure of the truth] became possible, he looked at me with the look of him who is friendly and glad of the meeting, and shows his true colours, after he had dissembled, saying to me: "I imagine thou art a brother of peregrination, and looking out for companionship. Wouldst thou then fain have a mate who is kind to thee and helps thee, and is indulgent with thee and shares in thy expenses?" Said I to him: "If such a mate came forward, providence, indeed, would favour me." He replied: "Thou hast found, so rejoice, and hast encountered the generous, so cleave to him." Then he had a long laugh, and stood before me, a sound man, when lo! it was our Shaykh of Serûj, with no ailment in his body, and nothing doubtful in his outward tokens. Then I rejoiced at meeting with him, and at the feignedness of his palsy, and bethought me of

rebuking him for the evilness of his ways, but he opened his mouth and indited before I could chide him :

"I show me in rags, so that people may say, a wretch that forbears with the hardships of times.

I feign to the world to be palsied of face, for often my heart thus obtaineth its wish ;

Ay, but for my raggedness find I compassion, and but for the palsy I meet with my wants."

Thereupon he said : "No pasture is left me in these parts, nor anything to be hoped for from their people, and if thou wilt be my mate, on our way with us, on our way!" So we fared forth from the place, we twain by ourselves, and I kept company with him for full two years, nay, I would fain have associated with him while my life lasts, but time, the disperser, forbade me.

THE THIRTY-FOURTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF ZABÎD."

In this Assembly Abû Zayd appears in the character of a slave-merchant. Hârith, while travelling in Yemen, had lost by death in the city of Zabîd a faithful servant, whom he found it difficult to replace. After having commissioned in vain the merchants of the town, to find him a substitute, he repairs himself to the market, where a man, muffled up in a Liṣâm or face-veil offers to him for sale a youth, whose good qualities he praises in some spirited verses. Hârith is struck by the boy's beauty, which ominously reminds him of Joseph, whose comeliness had made the Egyptian ladies compare him to an angel. He asks the boy for his name, but receives no answer, and only after he has shown his vexation at this, the youth, less in obedience to his intended purchaser's wish, than to impart to him a derisive warning, emphatically says. "I am Joseph, I am Joseph," implying thereby that his case is identical with that of the patriarch, and that he, as free-born, could as little be sold lawfully as Joseph was by his brothers. The hint, however, is lost on Hârith, who eagerly concludes the bargain, but, after the merchant is gone, soon finds out his mistake. For the boy, now openly claiming his freedom, appeals to the Kadi of the place, who con-

firms his statement, by mentioning, that only the day before his father had given in court a declaration to that effect. On further inquiry, Hârith learns with dismay that the father's name is Abû Zayd, and he forswears all future intercourse with the wily Shaykh, until this one meets him in a narrow road, and again charms him into more friendly feelings, although this last experience of the other's unscrupulous proceedings still rankles in his mind.

Al Hârith, son of Hammâm, related : When I crossed the deserts as far as Zabîd, I had with me a slave, whom I had reared up to his full age, and trained until he had perfected his right conduct, and he was fully familiar with my ways, and knew how to draw forth my goodwill, so as not to over-step my intentions, nor to be remiss in [carrying out] my wishes. Therefore needs his good services had won him my heart, and I singled him out [as my companion] in my stay and travel. But pernicious fate made away with him when we had reached Zabîd, and when "the sole of his foot was turned up," and his voice had waxed still, I was a year without relishing my food, or looking out for another servant, until the various inconveniences of solitary life, and the troubles of getting up and sitting down drove me to take the bead instead of the pearl, and to hunt for one who might be a stopgap for my needs. So I repaired to the slave-sellers in the market of Zabîd, when I said : "I want a lad who gives satisfaction when he is probed [tried] and who is approved when he is tested, and let him be one of those whom the intelligent have brought out, and poverty alone has thrown into the market." Then every one of them bestirred himself for the object of my search, and bustled about and exerted himself to encompass it speedily. Thereupon the new moons completed their round, and turned in

their increase and wane, but there came to pass [the fulfilment of] none of their promises, and no thunder-cloud yielded rain in response thereto. Now when I saw that the slave-merchants had either forgotten or pretended to forget, I knew that not everyone who undertakes a work carries it through, and that naught will scratch my skin as well as my own nail, so I abandoned the way of commissioning and sallied forth to the market with the yellow and the white ones, and had the slave-boys led past me, inquiring for the prices, when, lo! there accosted me a man who had the face-veil drawn over his nostrils, and who held a boy by his fore-arm, saying :

"Who buys from me a lad who proves deft at his work, and is in make and manners surpassingly fair?

Equal to any task thou mayest lay upon him, who speeds thee when he speaks, and spoken to attends;

Who if thou stumble says to thee: 'Rise to thy feet,' and if thou bid him: 'Enter the fire,' he enters it.

Who when thou wilt, if but a day, associates thee, and is contented but with a scrap, if such thy wish.

Although he have his wits collected, when he talks, he neither tells a lie nor claims more than his due.

He yields not to the call of any wish of his, nor lets a secret, trusted with him, get out of keep.

And oftentimes he makes one wonder at his skill, excelling both in prose and verse-stringing alike,

And were it not, by God, for life's straitening stress, and little ones that sadly want clothing and food:

I would not sell him for the realms that Kisra rules."

Now when I looked at his straight build and his exquisite beauty, I fancied him one of the youths of the garden of delight (Paradise), and quoth : "This is not a man, but for sooth an honoured angel." Then I wished him to enounce his name, not from a desire to

know it, but to see whether his elocution matched his comeliness and how his utterance responded to the fairness of his countenance. But he spoke not either sweet or bitter, and uttered not a sound of the son of slave-woman or a woman of free birth. So I turned aside from him and said: "Out upon thy impediment and be gone!" Then he burst out in laughter and shook with it, whereupon he nodded his head to me, and indited:

"O thou, whose wrath is kindled if I withhold my name, not thus a man, who in his dealings shows him fair!

But if thou be not pleased unless it be revealed, then listen: Joseph I am, a Joseph, hear!

Now have I lifted to thee the veil and if thy wits are sharp, thou knowest, but I fancy thou knowest not."

Then he allayed my anger by his poetry, and captivated my heart by his sorcery, so that I was too bewildered to perceive the truth, and made oblivious of the story of Joseph the faithful, and I concerned myself only with asking his master's charge for him, and inquiring after the amount of his price, so that I might pay it in full. Now I thought he would look askance at me and demand from me a high sum, but he did not soar whither I had soared, nor held he on to that to which I held on, nay, on the contrary he said: "Here is the boy! if the price is low, and his keep but slight, his master thinks himself blessed in him and loves him all the better for it, and I wish above all to make thee fond of the lad by lightening to thee the price for him; so weigh out two hundred dirhems if thou wilt, and be thankful to me as long as thou livest." So I paid him the amount at once, as the lawful price is paid in a cheap bargain, and it occurred not to my mind, that

everyone who sells cheap, makes one pay dear. Now when the transaction was concluded, and separation was impending, both eyes of the lad brimmed over with tears, though they were not the bloody tears of grief; then he stepped up to his master, and said:

"Allah confound thee! is it right to sell one such as me to fill the hungry bellies,

And is it walking in the path of justice, to make me bear what cannot be endured?

To try me sore with terror after terror, though one like me, if tried, cannot be frightened?

Yet hast thou probed me and experienced from me good counsels, unalloyed with any falsehood.

How often hast thou set me as a net for game, and I brought home prey captured in my snares;

And hast imposed on me tasks difficult that were obeyed, though I might have refused them.

How many a battle that I had to fight in, how many a booty, and I had no share.

And never, all my days, did I a sin, which, if thou break'st with me, could be revealed [unveiled],

Nor couldst thou stumble on a fault of mine, praise be to God, to hide it, or proclaim it.

How canst thou cast me off then so light-heartedly, as skilful women cast away their shreds?

And why allows thy soul thee to enslave me, and offer me for sale as goods are sold?

Wouldst thou not shield my honour, as I shield thy own concerns the day when parting grieves us,

And say to him who bartered for me: 'This is Sakâbi, neither to buy nor borrow'?

Now, I am not, for sooth, below that horse, but far above thy nature is their nature

And boldly sing I out: trading on me, my worth was lost to them, and what a worth!"

When the old man had understood his couplets and taken in [the meaning of] his ditty, he fetched a deep sigh and wept so as to make weep the far away, and said to me: "I hold this lad in the place of my son, and

distinguish him not from the lobes of my liver, and were it not for the emptiness of my abode and the extinction of my lamp, he would not go out of my nest till he escorted my bier. Now thou hast seen what has come to him of the pangs of separation, and the believer is kind and gentle. So wouldst thou have a mind, for the soothing of his heart, and the removal of his grief, to stipulate with me for the cancelling of his sale, whenever I asked for it, and not to find me importune if I should press for the same, for it is amongst the choice traditions transmitted by the trustworthy, that 'he who grants redemption to one repenting of his bargain, Allah remits to him his transgressions.'" Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Thereupon I made to him a promise, prompted by shame, but within my heart I thought otherwise. Then he bade the boy to approach him, and kissed him between both his eyes, inditing, while the tears were coursing from his lids:

"Bear patiently, my soul may be thy ransom, what thou hast met of sorrow and of anguish,
May not for long the time of parting last, nor flag the beasts that bring us to reunion;
Through aid of God, the Mighty, the Creator."

Then he said to him: "I commend thee to the keeping of one who is a good master," and tucked up his skirt and turned away. But the lad remained sobbing and wailing until the other might have gone the length of a mile, and when he had recovered himself and stopped the flow of his tears, he said: "Dost thou know for what I have wailed and what has been my object therein?" I said: "It is, I trow, the separation from thy master which has made thee weep." Said he:

"Thou art in one valley, and I am in another, and what a distance there is between a wisher and his wish." Then he indited:

"By Allah, weeping was I not for friend departed, nor eke for loss of any pleasure or delight,
But tears were flowing from my eyelids for a fool, whose eyes, though opened wide, led into pitfalls him,
So that he came to grief and was sadly disgraced, and lost his white engraven ones, his lustrous coin.
Woe thee, have not those subtle words warned thee enough, that I was free, and hence not lawful was my sale?
For clear as daylight should it be what Joseph meant."

Now I looked at his speech as a thing seen in the mirror of one who jests, or the exhibition of one indulging in pleasantry, but he waxed obstinate [restive] with the obstinacy [restiveness] of one who claims a right, and protested not to be tainted with the clay of servile condition; so we jostled about in an altercation which terminated in fisticuffs and led to an appeal to the judge. When we had explained the case to the Kadi, and read to him our Sura, he said: "Indeed, he who has warned has excused himself, he who has put one on his guard is like one who has given information, he who has made one see the state of affairs, has done no damage. Now what you both have said in explanation, demonstrates that this lad has tried to rouse thee, but thou wouldst not be awaked, and has advised thee, but thou wouldst not understand; therefore veil the ailment of thy stupidity and hide it, and blame thyself, but blame not him; beware to lay hold on him, and to wish to make him thy slave, for he is free of body, and not subject to be exposed for sale. It was only yesterday that his father brought him into

my presence, a little while before sunset, declaring him to be his branch that he had grown, and that he had no heir but him." Then I said to the Kadi: "And knowest thou his father? may Allah put him to shame!" He replied: "How should Abû Zayd be unknown for whose wound there is no retaliation, and of whom every Kadi has stories to tell and proclamation to make." Then I gnashed my teeth in anger and said, "There is no power and no strength, but in Allah, the Exalted, the Great," becoming wide awake, but when the time had slipped, and making sure that his face-veil was a net of his cunning, and the crowning couplet of his poem. So my mishap made me cast down my looks, and I swore that I would never again deal with the bearer of a face-veil as long as I lived, bewailing all the while my losing bargain, and the shame to which I should be put amongst my comrades. Then the Kadi said to me, when he saw my distress and became clearly aware of the brunt of my burning grief: "Ay such a one, thy loss has given thee a lesson, and he who has roused [awakened] thy wits, has not done thee an injury; take then warning by thy adventure and conceal from thy friends what has befallen thee; remember always what has occurred to thee, so as to keep in mind the admonition which thy money has administered thee and mould thyself after the disposition of one who has been tried and shown patience and who has profited by the examples set before him." Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Thereupon I took leave from him, donning the raiment of shame and sorrow and trailing my skirt of defrauded folly, and I purposed to show Abû Zayd my aversion by shunning him, and to cut him for the

remainder of my life, deliberately keeping aloof from his abode, and avoiding to see him, until he came upon me in a narrow path, and welcomed me with the welcome of an affectionate friend, though all I did was to frown at him and keep silent. Then he said: "What ails thee that thou turnest up thy nose at thy mate?" Answered I: "Hast thou forgotten that thou hast plotted against me, and cheated me, and done the thing which thou hast done?" Then he puffed his cheek and cracked it at me in derision, after which he indited appeasingly:

"O thou who show'st estrangement and curl'st up thy brow in savage scowl,
And featherest the shafts of blame that hit as hard, nay, harder, than arrows sharp
And sayest who sells a free-born an, as a nigger is sold or a dusky nag,
Cut short thy say, and know I am not the first therein as thou seem'st to think:
Heretofore the tribes sold Joseph, though they were what people know they were.
So it is; and by the holy house that in Tihâmeh is visited
And those who circumambulate it, emaciated, with ashen locks,
Not had I stood in this place of shame, I swear it, if I owned a coin.
So excuse thy brother, and bother not with the blame of one who ignores the facts."

Thereupon he said: "My excuse is plain and thy dirhems are gone. But if thy shrinking from me and thy aversion towards me arises from the excess of thy tender concern for the remainder of thy pelf, I am not of those who sting twice and make one tread upon two cinders, and if thou art cross and givest way to thy stinginess, in order to escape the bait that hangs in my nets, the mourning-women will weep over thy wits."

Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: So he deluded me by his deceitful utterance and his powerful sorcery into turning his friend and becoming attached to him again, flinging the remembrance of his exploit behind me, though it was an abominable thing.

THE THIRTY-FIFTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF SHIRAZ."

This composition is in the style of the eighth and the earlier part of the twenty-ninth Assembly. Abû Zayd describes, in a company of distinguished men of literary tastes in Shiraz, where Ḥârith has met them, a wine-cask metaphorically under the simile of a maiden, for whom, as he tells the people, he desires to purchase wedding attire. They give him money, and it turns out that by the wedding attire is meant a flagon and a cup, which were necessary to wed as it were the wine-cask to the drinker. The allegory may have been suggested by the circumstance that the scene of the event is Shiraz, a city celebrated for its wine, or rather for the manufacture of a peculiar kind of wine-flagons, which on account of their exquisite workmanship are used in preference to others for presenting in the wines of superior quality.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, narrated: In my roamings I met in Shiraz with an Assembly, who invited the passer-by to stay, even if he should be in haste, and I was unable to tear myself away from them, and my foot would not move to step past them, for I inclined to them, so that I might test their intrinsic worth and see how their fruit would be from their blossom. Now they proved to be select people, and he who inclined to them was profited, and while we were engaged in talk pleasanter than the songs of birds and more delightful than the milk of grapes, there entered our midst a man in two tattered pieces of clothing who had wellnigh reached the two terms of life. He greeted us with

glib tongue, and expressed himself in the delivery of the eloquent; then he sat down as one joining in the assembly, with his hands round his knees, and said: "O Allah, let us be of the rightly guided." Now the people made little of him, on account of his ragged attire, forgetting that they would have to reckon with the two things smallest in him (his tongue and heart), and they began to bandy between them the chapter of rhetoric, counting its aloës as common wood, but he vouchsafed not a word, nor declared himself by any sign until he had probed their intellectual powers, and knew who of them made rise the scale and who weighed it down. But when he had brought to light their buried treasures and exhausted their quivers, he said: "O ye people, if you had known that behind the plug there is pure wine you would not have slighted a bearer of tattered garments, but asked what parts he possesses." Then he let flow of the springs of learning, and of choice sayings that whereby he drew forth marvels of wonderment and which was worthy to be written in fluid gold; and when he had captivated all their senses, and made every heart turn to him, he stirred for taking his departure, and made ready to go. But the company clung to him and barred the course of his progress, saying: "We have just seen the sign of thy arrow, now make known to us the shell of thy egg and its yolk." Then he was silent with the silence of one choked by tears, whereupon he wailed so that he was pitied by all. Said the narrator: Now when I saw the mixture and tinge of Abû Zayd, and his wonted ways and manners of proceeding, I looked hard at the old

an, with all his defacement of countenance and ful-

someness, and lo! it was he himself. But I concealed his secret, as an internal disease is concealed, and veiled his cunning scheme, although he did not think so, until when he ceased wailing, he blinked at me with an eye full of laughter, whereupon he began to indite with the tongue of one who shams tearfulness:

"I crave Allah's forgiveness, humbling myself, for all the sins whose heavy load burdens me.

O folks, how many olden maids kept at home, though in assemblies were their virtues praised about

Have I cut down not fearing from any heir that might revenge them on me or claim a fine.

And when the sin thereof was laid at my door, I boldly cleared myself and said: fate it was.

And never stopped my soul its headlong career in cutting damsels down, and kept going stray,

Till hoariness shone on the crown of my head and checked me from performing such evil deeds.

So since my temples have turned grey never shed I any more a maiden's blood, old or young,

But now I rear, in spite of what may be seen of my condition and of my slacking trade,

A lass who for a long time has stayed at home, sheltered and veiled carefully from air itself.

And she in spite of being thus kept recluse, has wooers for her comeliness and pleasingness.

But for her outfit, at the least, I can't do without a hundred, though I try as I may,

While in my hand there is not one silver coin, the ground is empty and the sky yields no rain.

Now is one here to help me that I may wed her amidst the singing-girls' cheering strain,

Then let him wash my grief with its proper soap and cleanse my heart from sorrows that worry me,

That he ay cull my praises, whose fragrancy will only cease to breathe when man prays in vain."

Said the narrator: Then there was none left in the company but his palm opened to him and his kindness reached him, and when his wish had proved successful

and his hundred was completed, he praised them as beseems the upright, and tucked up his skirt for departure. But I followed him, wishing to learn who was the foster-daughter of his chamber and whom he had cut down in his early life, and it was as if the swiftness of my rising had made him aware of my intention, for he approached me and said: "Hearken to me,

"'Cutting down' means with one like me 'thinning the wine' not, O friend, with the lance or sword killing a man.

And the maid, kept at home with me, means the daughter of the grape-tree, not virgin of high descent [extraction].

And to wed her to cup and flask was the errand, which thou saw'st me intent upon when I joined you.

Understand then what I have said, and decide on kind forbearance, if so thy will, or rebuking."

Then he said: "I am quarrelsome and thou art faint-hearted, so there is a wide gulf between us." Thereupon he bade me farewell, and went away, making me send after him more than one glance of loving affection.

THE THIRTY-SIXTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF MALTÎYAH."

In this Assembly Abû Zayd proposes twenty riddles or conundrums of a particular kind, and all of the same form, which consists in finding a word resembling a given short sentence in such a manner, that its component parts are synonymous with the members of the phrase in question. The introduction to the Assembly itself adduces as an instance the query, what is like *an-naum fât*, Sleep has departed, to which the answer would be *al-karâmât*, pl. of *karâmah* in the sense of "wonder," "iracle," because the initial part of the word, *al-karâ*, eans "slumber," and the final syllable, *mât*, signifies "is dead." The English reader of this translation will not be worse off than Abû Zayd's Arabic audience, for the author gives no solution in the body of the Assembly, leaving its discovery to the ingenuity of the listener, but if his curiosity and interest

are roused by the quaint form of the questions and the lively style in which they are introduced, he will find at the cost of small trouble amusement as well as linguistic instruction in the short commentary, which Harîri himself has attached to this composition.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I made my camel of foreign travel kneel down at Maltîyah, and my pouch was at that time well filled with coin. So I made it my wont, when I had deposed there my staff, to frequent the places of entertainment and to hunt after rare pleasures, so that nothing escaped me worthy to be seen or heard, and no play-ground or resort of enjoyment was left unvisited by me, until, when I had no further business there, and no desire for longer stay, I resolved to expend my remaining gold in buying travelling gear. Now when I had completed my preparations, and was ready for departure, or all but ready, I saw a group of nine people, who had purchased some wine, wherewith they had ascended a hillock, and their winning manners captivated men's eyes, while their pleasantry was sweet-spoken. Therefore I wended towards them from a wish to join in their conversation, not in their drinking-bout, and from eagerness to mix with them, not to taste the contents of their tumblers. Now when I had become the tenth in their string, and a companion in their forenoon meeting, I found them to be a medley assemblage thrown together from the deserts, though the woof of literary culture united them as with the union of relationship, and matched them in their ranks, so that they shone like the luminaries of the Twins, and appeared as a community whose members are of one kindred. So I rejoiced at having been guided to them, and praised the lucky star

that had made me light upon them, beginning to shake my arrow together with their arrows, and to solace myself with the perfume of their refinement, not with that of their wine, until the branch-roads of discussion led us to the proposing of riddles, as if thou sayst, intending thereby *al-karâmat*, what is like "*al-naum fât*" (sleep has departed), which may be expressed by "*al-karâ mât*" (slumber is dead), whereupon we began to display both Sohá (the smallest star in the Bear) and the moon, and to cull both the thorn and the fruit, and while we were spreading out the fresh and the old, and drawing from [fishing out of] the pot the fat and the lean, an old man intruded upon us, whose bloom of complexion and beauty of form had gone, while knowledge and experience remained with him. Then he stood as one who listens and observes, picking up what we were scattering, until the purses were empty and it became obvious that no more was to be hoped for. Now when he saw the flagging of their powers [faculties], and that both he who drew water from the top of the well, and he who drew it from the bottom, were equally baffled, he gathered his skirts together, and turned his back on us, saying: "Not everything black is a date, nor is everything ruddy wine." Then we clung to him as the chameleon clings to the trees, and blocked his progress as with bars, saying to him: "The cure of a rent is to stitch it, and if not, then retaliation! retaliation! So hope not to wound while thou art safe, and to make bleed the gash while thou goest scot-free." Then he turned his bridle, sitting down in his place for a good stay, and said: "Since you have challenged me to discussion, I shall

give the judgment of Solomon in the matter of the sown field. Know, ye owners of literary accomplishments and golden coloured wine, that the proposing of riddles is for the purpose of testing the quickness of wit and bringing out its hidden treasures, under the condition, that they are founded on a real resemblance and contain meaning words, and some scholarly nicety. For if they are of a style different from this they are refuse [worthless], and not to be put into the casket [as something worthy to be preserved], and I noticed that your definitions kept not within these limits, and distinguished not between the acceptable and the objectionable." We said to him: "Thou art right, and hast spoken the truth. But measure out to us somewhat from thy select store, and pour upon us from thy main sea" [ocean]. Said he: "I will do so in a manner that those who failed may not doubt, nor look at me with suspicion." Then he turned to the foremost of the people, and said:

1. "O thou who excels in sharpness, who strikes the fire-sticks of merit,
What is it that likens saying: 'hunger is cheered by provisions'?"

Then he smiled to the second, and indited:

2. "O an of surpassing honour, unsullied by any baseness,
What is if one in riddling would say. 'a back looked kance at'?"

Then he glanced at the third, saying:

3. "O thou, the children of whose thought resemble coin of ready course,
What is like saying to a man thou pliest with riddles: 'he met a gift'?"

Then he stretched his neck towards the fourth, and said:

4. "O thou who solvest what is intricate of riddles and enigmas,
Reveal to me that which resembles to 'take a thousand gold coins'?"

Then he cast his eye upon the fifth, and said:

5. "O such an one of shrewdest wit, endowed with brightest sagacity,
What resembles 'he neglects adornment'? If rightly guided, be quick and tell."

Then he turned in the direction of the sixth, and said:

6. "O thou from whose capacity a rival's steps stop short by far,
What is like thy saying to him who joins with thee in riddles: 'Hold in! hold in!'?"

Then he winked his eyebrows towards the seventh, and said:

7. "O thou who own'st intellect of brilliancy, in subtleness high of rank amongst thy friends,
Explain, and, mind, tell aright in doing so, what saying is similar to 'brother fled'?"

Then he bade the eighth to listen, and indited:

8 "O thou whose gardens of excellence are fresh with flowers in bright array,
What is like telling the sharp of wit in solving riddles 'he chose not silver'?"

Then he cast a glance upon the ninth, and said:

9. "O thou to whom they point for a mind of ready wit and for eloquence,
Expound to us, what is like the speech of the riddler: 'tread upon the crowd'?"

Said the narrator: Now when he came at last to me, he patted me on the shoulder saying:

10. "O thou possessed of subtleties to baffle sore and floor opponents,
Thou makest clear, so tell us what is like my saying. "be still, my uncle'?"

Then he said: "I have watered you and allowed you time, and if you want me to let you have another draught, I let you have it." So the brunt [heat] of thirst drove us to ask for a second drink. Whereupon he said: "I am not like one who from selfishness stints his boon-companions, nor of those whose fat remains in their own dish." Then he returned to the first, and said:

11. "O thou whose sharpness unfolds a riddle [unties a ticklish knot], however tight,
If one propose as a riddle, 'take this,' say true what is like it."

Then he bent his neck towards the second, and said:

12. "O thou whose eloquence appears clear from his skill in explanation,
What is as if people would say: 'an onager has been decked out'?"

Then he blinked towards the third, and said:

13. "O thou who in sagacity and sharpness art like Asma'ī,
What is like saying by way of riddle: 'spend lavishly, thou conquerest then'?"

Then he looked sharp at the fourth, and indited:

14. "O thou who if knotty questions arise enlightens their darkness,
What is it that likens saying: 'sniff in the perfume of grape-wine'?"

Then he ogled the fifth, and said:

15. "O thou whose intellect lets him not give way to anxious thoughts and doubt,
What resembles saying to a man expert in riddles: 'shield the ruined'?"

Then he stepped in front of the sixth, and indited:

16. "O thou endowed with sagacity in which thy perfect worth appears,
The saying, 'he travelled awhile at night,' say what a thing is like to it."

Then he turned his glance towards the seventh, and said :

17. "O thou whose wit, brisk of market, gives thee adornment and honour,
Say, for thou art able to tell us, what word is like 'love a coward'?"

Then he looked in the direction of the eighth, and said :

18. "O thou who in fame hast reached a height surpassing every height by far,
What resembles, tell us, saying: 'give a crook [crutch] deprived of the handle-part'?"

Then he smiled to the ninth, and said :

19. "O thou who hold'st undoubtedly fine judgment and elocution,
What is like saying to the skilled in solving riddles: "I own the bullock'?"

Then he clutched my sleeve, and said :

20. "O thou who hast penetrating sharpness of wit in solving intricate question, bright as a star,
What is resembling the saying: 'whiz of a muzzle'? Explain so that thy expounding renders it clear."

Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Now when he had delighted us with what we had heard, and challenged us to disclose its meaning, we answered: "We are not of the horses of this racecourse, and our hands are not equal to untying these knots; so if thou wilt explain, thou conferrest a favour, and if thou wilt keep it hidden, thou inflictest grief." Then he consulted his mind for and against and shook both his arrows (of consent or refusal), until he was pleased to vouchsafe the bounty, coming forward to the company, and saying: "O ye people of eloquence and distinction, I will forthwith make known to you that which you know not, and thought not you would ever know, so

fasten upon it your vessels and freshen therewith the assemblies." Then he began an explanation which furbished the intellects, and withal emptied the sleeves (breast pockets), until the understandings became brighter than the sun, and the pockets as if yesterday they had not been rich. Now when he bethought himself of departure, he was asked about his abode. Then he sighed as sigheth the bereft mother, and said:

"Each mountain-path is path for me, and ample is my dwelling there,
Save that for Serûj town my heart is crazed with longing, mad with love.
She is my virgin land from whence my erewhile youthful breeze has sprung,
And for her mead so rich of growth above all meads I fondly yearn.
Afar from her no sweet is sweet to e, delightful no delight."

Concluded the narrator his tale: Thereupon I said to my companions, "This is Abû Zayd, the Serûji, whose riddles are the least of his elegancies," and I began to descry to them the beauty of his diction, and the obedience of speech to his will. Then I turned round, and lo! he had leaped up, and was gone with what he had gained. So we wondered at his performance, when he had fallen in our midst, and knew not whither he had wended and swerved.

EXPLANATION OF THE RIDDLES.

1. *Hunger is cheered by provisions* (*jû' umidd bi-zâd*) resembles *tawâmîr*, pl. of *ṭâmûr*, books, rolls, scrolls (= *ṭawâ*, hunger, + *mîr*, pass. of *mâr*, has been provided for).

2. *A back* (*which is*) *looked askance at* (*ẓahr aṣâbathu 'ain*) resembles *maṭâ'în*, pl. of *maṭ'ûn*, pierced with a lance (= *maṭâ*, back, + *'în*, pass. of *'ân*, is struck by the evil eye).

3. *He met a gift* (*ṣâdaf jâ'izah*) resembles *al-fâṣilah*, fe . of *al-fâṣil*, what separates two things (= *alfâ*, he found, + *ṣilah*, a gift).

4. *Take a thousand gold coins* (*tanâwal alf dînâr*) resembles *hâdiyah*, fem. of *hâdî*, one who guides aright (= *hâ*, take, + *diyah*, fine for bloodshed which amounts to 1,000 dînârs).

5. *He neglects adornment* (*ahmal hilyah*) resembles *al-ghâshiyah*, a saddle-cloth (= *alghâ*, he disregarded, + *shiyah*, finery).

6 *Hold in! hold in!* (*ukfuf, ukfuf*) resembles *mahinah*, a desert (= *mah*, stop, repeated for the sake of emphasis).

7. *Brother fled* (*ash-shaqîq aflat*) resembles *akhtâr*, pl. of *khatar*, dangers (= *akh*, brother, + *târ*, he flew, took to flight).

8. *He chose not silver* (*mâ akhtâr fiẓẓah* (resembles *abâriqah*, pl. of *ibrîq*, pitchers (= *abâ*, he refused, + *riqah*, a silver coin).

9. *Tread upon a crowd* (*das jamâ'ah*) resembles *tâfiyah*, fem of *ṭâfî*, what floats on the water (= *tâ*, for *ta'*, imp. of *wata'*, tread under foot, trample upon, + *fiyah*, for *fi'ah*, a troup of men).

10. *Be still my uncle* (*khâlî uskut*) resembles *khâliṣah*, fem. of *khâliṣ*, pure, sincere (= *khâli*, apocopated vocative of *khâlî*, my maternal uncle, + *ṣah*, hush !).

11. *Take this* (*khuz tilk*) resembles *hâtîk*, this woman (= *hâ*, take, as in the 4th riddle, + *tîk*, fem. of *zâk*, this).

12. *An onager has been decked out* (*ḥimâr waḥsh zîn*) resembles *farâzîn*, pl. of *firzân*, Queens in chess (= *firâ*, wild ass, + *zîn*, pass. of *zân*, he was adorned).

13. *Spend lavishly, thou conquerest then* (*infaq taqma'*) resembles *muntaqim*, one who avenges himself (= *mun*, imp of *mân*, spend on provisions, + *taqim*, aor. of *waqam*, thou subduest).

14. *Sniff in the perfume of grape-wine* (*istanshi rîh mudâmah*) re- se bles *raḥrâḥ*, vast, wide, ample (= *raḥ*, imp. of *râḥ*, smell, + *râḥ*, one of the names of wine).

15. *Shield the ruined* (*ghatṭi halkâ*) resembles *ṣunbûr*, an isolated palm-tree, a word also of various meanings (= *ṣun*, imp. of *ṣân*, shelter, protect, preserve, + *bûr*, pl. of *bâ'ir*, doomed to destruction).

16. *He travelled a while at night* (*sâr bi l-lail muddah*) resembles *saraḥîn*, pl. of *sirḥân*, wolves (= *sarâ*, he fared at night, + *ḥîn*, ti e).

17. *Love a coward* (*iḥbab farâqah*) rese bles *miqlâ'*, a sling (= *miq*, imp. of *wamiq*, be in love with, + *lâ'*, ti id, pusillanimous).

18. *Give a crock deprived of the handle-part* (*a'ṭi ibrîq yalûḥ bighair 'uruah*) resembles *uskûb*, flowing, shed (= *us*, imp. of *âs*, bestow, + *kûb*, a mug without handle).

19. *I own the bullock* (*aṣ-saur milkî*) resembles *al-laâlî*, pl. of *lu'lu'*, the pearls (= *al-la'â*, the wild ox, + *lî*, to me, mine).

20. *Whiz of a muzzle* (*ṣafîr jaḥfalah*) resembles *mukâshafah*, uncovering, disclosing (= *mukâ*, a whistling sound, produced by blowing into one's hand, + *shafah*, lip).

THE THIRTY-SEVENTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF SA'DAH."

In Ṣa'dah, one of the chief towns of Yemen, Al Hârith has contracted an intimacy with the Kadi of the place, whom he occasionally assists in the decision of law cases. One day an old man presents himself before them, complaining bitterly of the untractableness and disobedience of his son. The youth retorts, that his father urges him to beg, although he had formerly strongly impressed him with the ignominy of the practice, in support of which he quotes some verses that his father had taught him on the subject. The latter rejoins that necessity knows no law, and recites on his part some lines of the boy's composition, to the effect, that rather than meekly to submit to poverty a needy man should appeal to the liberality of the wealthy. Thus placed on the horns of a dilemma, the youth sullenly disclaims the use of any such appeal, when munificence is no longer to be found in the world. This stings the Kadi, who belongs to the tribe of Temîm, renowned for their generous disposition, into bestowing a bounty on them, and they leave the court together, the father well pleased with his booty, the son simulating earnest remorsefulness. Hârith, whose instinct had told him that the apparent excessive decrepitude of the old man is only a blind, follows and overtakes them, and a cordial recognition takes place between him and Abû Zayd, who, however, soon manages to give him the slip, so as to escape all further inquiries.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I had travelled up to Sa'dah, at a time when I was straight of stature like a spear-shaft and of vigour that outstripped the daughters of Sa'dah (the young of the onager or ostrich). Now when I had seen its freshness and fed [my looks] on her meads, I inquired from the most knowing of its informants, whom of lordly persons and mines of excellence it contained, so that I might take him for a beacon-light (ember) in times of darkness, and my tower of strength in days of oppression. Then there was pointed out to me a Kadi, wide of range [in generosity], easy in his circumstances, a Temîmî in

descent and disposition. So I ceased not seeking approach to him by respectful attendance, at the same time making myself valuable to him by being chary in visiting, until I became the echo of his voice, and the Salmân of his household, and while gathering his honey and inhaling the fragrance of his bay-tree, I used to witness the contentions of litigant parties and to mediate between the unoffending of them and the offender. Now when the Kadi was sitting to give judgment on a day of flocking together and crowding, lo! there entered an old man, in plumage worse for the wear, of shaky appearance, who looked at the throng with the sharp look of the money-sifter. Then he stated that he had an unmanageable adversary, and it was not but as the scintillating of a spark or the intimation of a beckoning finger, that a lad was put in presence [bold] as though he were a lion. Said the old man: "May Allah help the Kadi, and preserve him from [ever becoming guilty of] connivance! behold this my son, like a bad reed-pen or a rusty sword, ignores the predicaments of equity, and suckles the teats of contravention [contradiction, opposition, gainsaying]. When I advanced, he drew back, when I spoke plain, he shuffled in his speech, when I kindled a fire, he put it out, and when I roasted, he scattered ashes, although I had reared him since he first crawled until he was a youth, and was to him the kindest of trainers and educators." Then the Kadi made much of [put great stress upon] his complaint, and those around him were amazed at it [as at a case of grave concern]. Thereupon he said: "I protest that disobedience in children is one bereavement of twain, and that many an instance

of infertility keeps the eye cooler." Said the boy whom this speech had incensed: "By Him who has set up judges for the sake of justice, and possessed them of the reins of preferment and discrimination, forsooth, he never prayed, but I said Amen, and he never made a claim, but I maintained its truth, he never said '*labbaika*,' but I donned the pilgrim's cloak, and he never struck fire, but I gave sparks, in spite of his being like one who craves for the eggs of the cock-hawk, and wants the camels to fly." Then the Kadi said to him: "Wherewith then used he to vex thee and to try thy obedience?" He said: "Ever since his substance has gone, and he has been visited with penury, he urges me to roll about my tongue in begging, and to ask rain from the clouds of bounty, so that his draught, which was dried up, might flow afresh in abundance, and what was broken in his fortunes might be set again. Yet when he had first taken me into schooling, and taught me culture of mind, he imbued my heart with the notion, that inordinate desire is a thing to be blamed, and covetousness worthy of rebuke, that greed breeds indigestion, and begging is a reproach. Then he indited to me, straight from the parting of his lips, with all the polish of his verse:

"'Content thyself with scanty means, giving thanks therefor, like one who recks the little mighty much.

Shun greediness, that never fails lowering the worth of any wight who may take to it.

Fend thy fair fame and shield it with jealous care, as with a frown the lion would fend his mane.

Bear thou with patience, and forbear, poverty, as lords of holy purpose bore patiently;

Spill not the water of thy face even if he whom thou beg'st from spends on thee gifts galore.

For free is he, who if a ote hurts his eye conceals the mote from even his pupils twain,

And if his whilom gold-stuff has gone to rags sees not his way by begging to fret his cheeks.'"

Then the old man contracted his brows and scowled at his son, and rushed upon him and growled, saying: "Hush! O thou disobedient one, O thou who art choking and stifling me! Woe betide thee, wilt thou teach thy mother how to copulate, and thy nurse how to give thee suck? forsooth, the scorpion has rubbed himself against the snake, and the weanlings have coursed along with the stallions." Then it was as if he repented of what had escaped his mouth, and affection led him to conciliate the boy, for he looked at him with the eye of the fondly disposed, and lowered to him the wing of the kindly, saying: "Alas! dear son, those who are bidden to be contented, and chidden from self-abasement are the owners of merchandise, and the workers for gain through handicraft, but as for those who are possessed of needs, an exception is made in their behalf with regard to matters prohibited. And granted thou wast ignorant of this interpretation, and it has not reached thee what has been said [on this point], wast not thou he who opposed his father in what he said, not revering him:

"'Sit not content with distress and suffering hunger's pangs, that people may say he is high-minded and patience full.

See for thyself if a land that is not decked out with plants, is like a land all around hedged in with trees, rich of growth;

So wend aside fro what fools are in their sloth pointing to, for say, what good can there be in wood that bears never fruit?

And lead thy beasts from a place where thou sustainest brunt of thirst, to pasture-grounds whereupon in fertile flow falls the rain,

And ask the drought to descend full from the breast of the cloud, for if thy hands are bedewed then may thy gain prosper thee,

But if thou shouldst be denied, there is no harm in rebuff, for Moses met heretofore, and Prophet Khiẓr, with the same.'"

Said the narrator: Now when the Kadi saw the contradiction between the speech of the lad and his action, and that he adorned himself with that which was not his own, he looked with wrathful eye, and said: "Temîmî at one time, and Kaisî at another? Fie upon him, who belies what he says, and changes colour as the Ghûl changes colour." Then the boy said: "By Him, who has made thee a key for the truth, and an opener [of justice] amongst mankind, I have been caused to forget, since I became sorrowful, and my wits have been turned rusty, since I waxed thirsty. Moreover, where is the open door, and the ready gift? And is there one left who bestows with full hands, and if asked for food says: 'Take.'" Thereupon the Kadi replied to him: "Stop! for among the missing arrows is one that hits, and not every lightning deceives, so distinguish between the flashes if thou watchest the clouds [for rain], and testify not but what thou knowest." Now when the old man saw that the Kadi was wroth on account of the generous, and thought it a serious thing to reckon all men as [to be] misers, he knew that he would abet his word, and show his munificence. So he belied him not [was not slow] in setting his net, and baking his fish before the fire, and quoth saying:

"O Kadi, thou whose wisdom and kindliness more deeply are rooted than mount Raḍwá,

This youth maintains, isguided by ignorance, that in this world none exercise bounty,

Not knowing that thou art the son of a tribe, whose gifts are like yon quails and yon Manna.

Confer thou then that which will make him ashamed of what he forged of impudent falsehood,

And let me go rejoicing and giving praise for what in helpful bounty thou spendest."

Then the Kadi was pleased at his speech, and bestowed on him liberally of his largess, whereupon he turned his face towards the boy, for whom he had already headed the arrows of rebuke, and said to him: "Hast thou now seen the refutation of thy assertion, and the error of thy opinion? So be not henceforth hasty in thy blame, and pare no wood before testing it; and beware to refuse obedience to thy father. For if thou return to thy revolt against him, there will alight on thee from me that which thou deservest." Then the youth was dumfounded with repentance (fell to biting his hand with remorse), and sought shelter by his parent's side, and presently rose and sped away, while the old man followed him inditing:

"Let him whom his fell fortune has treated ill repair to Ṣa'dah town and her Kadi.

His bounty shames the bounteous that went before, his justice baffles those who come after."

Said the narrator: Now I was bewildered in my mind as to whether I knew the old man, or not, until he had started off on his journey, when I persuaded myself to follow him, even if need be to his abode; haply I might become aware of his secrets and learn what tree was the fuel of his fire. So I flung from me what clung to me, and set out whither he had set out, and he ceased not to step along and I to follow in his track, he to get further, and I to come nearer to him,

until both were face to face, and recognition was incumbent on any two intimates. Then he showed gladness, and did away with his shakiness, saying: "He who deceives his brother may not live (enjoy life)." Accordingly I knew that he was the Serûji and no mistake, and without change of condition. So I hastened towards him to shake [clasp] his hand, and to inquire after his good and evil hap. Thereupon he said: "Here is the dutiful son of thy brother at hand for thee" (*i.e.*, let *him* tell thee what thou wantest to know), and left me passing his way. The youth, however, did but laugh, then he fled, as yonder had fled. So I went back after I had ascertained their identity, but where was I to find the twain of them?

THE THIRTY-EIGHTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF MERV."

"In the thirty-eighth Abû Zayd addresses the governor of a town" (for Englishmen it may not be without interest that the town in question is the famous city of Merv) "in some fine verses in praise of liberality to men of genius." With these few lines Chenery sums up this Maḳâmah, and Preston says that it contains little beyond a repetition of circumstances and phrases which occur in other Assemblies, and is of inferior interest to most of them. It should, however, be kept in view that Ḥarîri's work is not one to be read in uninterrupted succession, like a production of modern fiction, except perhaps by scholars. The whole plan of the work renders it almost inevitable that, to quote once more the words of the former distinguished translator, "the repetition of similar adventures and similar rhetoric becomes monotonous." But Ḥarîri is an author whose book may be taken in hand by a reader of cultivated mind and refined taste at any moment in which the mood seizes him, and be opened at random, when he will always be sure to find much that will entertain, interest, or instruct him, and if he happens to hit on the present Assembly, taking it by itself and on its own merits, I have no doubt that he will proclai it to be a co position of exquisite beauty,

conceived in Harîri's most happy vein, and written in his most brilliant style.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related : It had become dear to me ever since my foot moved and my pen sputtured, to take literary learning for my roadway and the kindling of my torch thereat for my pursuit. Accordingly I furrowed out its doctors and the treasures of its mysteries, and when I had found of them [such as are] the desire of the seeker, and the burning log to light one's fire from, I clutched with my hand his stirrup, and beseeched him for a dole from out his hoard. Withal I met none that equalled the Serûji in the abundant shower of his clouds, and in applying the pitch to the places where the symptoms of scab appear, save that he used to wander abroad faster than the proverb, and swifter than the moon in her changes, wherefore from longing to encounter him, and from my delight in joining his assemblies, I was eager for peregrination, and found enjoyment in travel which [according to a saying of Mohammed's] is part of the [infernal] torment. So at a time when I had strayed to Merv, and no wonder, the rousing of birds, and the presage which is the harbinger of good, gave me happy tidings of a meeting with him. Hence I ceased not spying for him in the assemblies and on the arrival of caravans, but I found none to give me news of him, nor saw I any trace or speck of him, until despair got the better of hope, and expectation became reduced and subdued. Now one day I was in the presence of the Wâlî of Merv, who was one of those who combine excellence with dominion, when lo, Abû Zayd roṣe to sight in the rags of one poverty-stricken, and greeted with the greeting

of the needy when he meets a lord of the crown. Then he said to the Wâlî: "Know thou, mayest thou be kept safe from blame, and spared sorrow, that on him who is entrusted with offices, hopes depend, and to him whose degrees have been exalted, needs [wants] are referred, and that he is the fortunate, who if he has the power and destiny aids him, pays the zakât for divine favours, as he pays the zakât for cattle, and who clings to the people commanding reverence, as he clings to his wife and close relations. Truly thou hast become, praise be to Allah, the support of thy city, and the pillar of thy age, to whose sanctuary the saddle-beasts are driven, and from whose generosity bounties are hoped, to whose court requests are carried, and from whose palm relief is expected to descend, for Allah's grace upon thee has been great, and His beneficence in thy behalf plentiful. Now I am an old man who grovels in the dust after having rolled in riches, and who lacks greencrop when he has waxed hoary. I have come to thee from a distant place, and a wretched state, hoping from thy sea a swell, and from thy rank a lift, and hope is the best means of propitiation for him who begs, and the best gift of him who gives. Therefore bestow upon me what is incumbent on thee, and deal me fair, as Allah has dealt fair with thee, and beware to turn thy face from him who visits thee, and repairs to thy house, and to close thy fist [in denial] from him who asks thy gift and appeals for support to thy generosity. For he excels not who is stingy, nor goes he the right way who hoards up. But he is the man of head and heart (*al-labîb*), who when he has, bestows, and when he first earns a profit, profits others, and the

liberal is he who, when he is asked for the gift of gold, is not afraid to give." Then he held in, looking out for the fruit of his planting and watching for the gratification of his soul. Now the Wâlî wished to know whether his well was shallow, or whether his spring had continuity. So he bent his head to think how to strike sparks from his fire-stick and how to discriminate the temper of his blade. But the secret of his silence and of the delaying of his gift was hidden from Abû Zayd: so he flared up in wrath, and indited improvising:

"Despise not [may never thee a curse betide] men of learning because they show clad in rags and destitute paupers,

Nor fail to pay due regard to him who comes full of hope, both if he be glib of speech or if he be tongue-tied.

But give thy bounty to him who solicits help from thee and raise by thy timely aid one whom thou seest downcast.

For hail the wealth of a man whose wealth obtains praise for him, the fame of which travellers through all the world blaze forth.

And he who buys fair renown from humankind by his gifts, will never be overreached, and though he gave rubies.

But for magnanimity the wise would have no excuse, if he aspires to what goes beyond the mere day's food.

Yet to acquire eulogy he strives, and moved by his love of nobleness, lifts his neck to aim at high places.

When he who is generous inhales the fragrance of thanks, he spurns the fragrance of musk, however fine pounded,

And never meet stinginess and praise so that one would think: a lizard this, that a fish, in water this, that ashore [on land].

Beneficence is beloved by men for its qualities, whereas the close-fisted wight is all his days hated.

And his excuses to spend his riches with kindliness, keep blame on him evermore, and people's stern censure.

Be bountiful then with what thy hands have been gathering, that he who begs for thy boon be ever dumfounded,

And take thy share, ere a stroke of fortune come over thee that shows thee thy tree of life deprived of its foliage.

For time is too fickle as in one state to endure, ayst thou delight in that state or may it be hateful."

Said the narrator: Then the Wâlî called him near on account of his ravishing discourse, until he had made him alight on the seat of the circumciser, whereupon he dealt out to him from the streams of his donation that which prognosticated length of skirt and shortness of night for him. So he rose from his presence with a full sleeve and a merry heart. But I followed him, keeping in his direction and tracking his step, until, when he was well out of the Wâlî's gate, and had got clear of his den, I said to him: "Mayst thou thrive on what has been given thee, and be allowed to enjoy long that which has been put in thy possession." Then his face lit up and beamed, and he continued thanks to Allah, be He exalted, whereupon he strutted along with a proud swing, and indited straight off:

"Know, who has gained a portion by plodding dulness, or who owes rank to virtues of those before him.

That my earnings are due to worth, not to meddling, and my station to power of speech, not to kings' grace"

Then he said: "Out on him who blames learning, and hail to him who strives after it and makes it his pursuit;" wherewith he bade me farewell, and went away, leaving me aflame with longing for him.

THE THIRTY-NINTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF 'OMÂN."

Called by some important business to 'Omân on the eastern coast of Arabia, Hârith is about to cross the Persian Gulf, when at the moment of departure an old man begs to be taken on board, promising the ship-company in return for their kindness to him, a safe passage, by means of a magic spell in his possession against all dangers of the sea. They comply with his request, and Ḥârith is enchanted when he recognises in the stranger his old friend Abû Zayd. At first all seems to go well. Probably, however, unknown

to the rest of the company, some miscreant was on board, whose presence counteracted to a certain degree Abû Zayd's panacea, for after the voyage had continued for some time under the most promising auspices, they are suddenly overtaken by a violent storm, which forces them to seek refuge in the port of an island. When their provisions begin to run dangerously short, Abû Zayd prevails on Hârith to go with him on land for a foraging expedition. Soon they arrived at a magnificent mansion, whose numerous servants are found to be plunged into the utmost grief, because the lady of the house is labouring in throes of a difficult child-birth, and her life almost despaired of. Abû Zayd reassures them, pretending to have another powerful charm for the occasion. With a great display of solemnity, he writes some verses on a piece of meerschaum in which he warns the child of the evils of existence and the troubles of life awaiting it in the world, and which, with delightful humour, are supposed, according to the innate perverseness of man's heart, to act as an irresistible inducement for it to struggle into the light of day. Wrapped in a piece of silk, and profusely perfumed, the talisman is, at his orders, tied to the limbs of the labouring woman, and this time the incantation works well, for soon the confinement is happily got over. The lord of the mansion, in his boundless joy at the birth of a long desired son, not only overwhelms Abû Zayd with costly tokens of his gratitude, but attaches him to his household, with unlimited control over all his wealth. Ḥârith tries to persuade him to continue with him the voyage, but Abû Zayd refuses point blank, paraphrasing in another piece of his charming poetry the popular saying *ubi bene ibi patria*, and Ḥârith reluctantly separates from him, giving vent to his grief and disappointment in a wish, the savagery of which may playfully be converted into the essence of the milk of hu an kindness by the indulgent reader, who remembers the drift of Abû Zayd's magical verses, and the words of the Greek poet:

"Best for man not to be born, second best, to die as soon as he can."

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I clung, ever since the pile under my *izâr* had grown black, and the down of my cheek had sprouted, to fare through the deserts on the backs of Mahrî camels, now ascending a mountain-tract, now threading my way through low-land, so as to explore the wilds whether trodden or trackless, and to get to ken the road-stations and

watering-places, making the blood flow from the hoofs of horses and camels and jading the swift steeds and the fleet dromedaries. Once when I was weary of desert-travel, and some matter of importance cropped up for me at Ṣuhâr, I inclined to cross the billowy sea and to choose the swift-sailing ship. So I removed to it my chattels, and took along with me my provisions and water-bags; then I embarked therein as embarketh the timid, who registers vows, who blames himself and would fain find excuses. Scarcely had we settled on board, and hoisted the sails for speed, when we heard from the shore of the roadstead, while the night was darkening and waxing gloomy, a caller who said: "O ye people of this strongbuilt ship, driven on the high sea, by decree of the Mighty, the All-knowing, shall I direct you unto a merchandise that will deliver you from sore torment?" (Koran lxi. 10). Then we said: "Light for us a brand from thy fire, O thou guide, and show us the right path, as the trusty friend shows the right path to the trusty friend." He replied: "Will ye take for companion a son of the road, who carries his provisions in a basket, and whose shadow is not heavy, wishing for nought but a sleeping-place?" So we resolved to lower our wings to him, and not to be stingy in providing for his need. When he had come aboard of the ship, he said: "I take refuge with Allah from the paths of destruction." Then he said: "We have been told in the Traditions, handed down by the doctors of divinity, that Allah, be He exalted, has not made it binding on the ignorant to learn, any more than He has made it incumbent on the learned to teach. Now I possess a charm transmitted from the

Prophets, and I have an advice for you sound of proofs, which it is not in my power to conceal, nor in my nature to withhold. Ponder then my speech and take it in, and learn what you are taught so that you may teach others." Thereupon he shouted with the shout of the boaster, exclaiming: "Know ye what it is? It is the spell of travellers, when voyaging on the sea, and the shield against anxiety, when the wave of the deep rages. By it Noah was protected from the flood, together with what was with him of animated beings, as the verses of the Koran record it." Then after some stories he read out, and some tinselled talk he polished up, he quoted [from the Koran]: "And he said, 'Embark ye therein: in the name of God be its course, and its riding at anchor.'" Thereupon he sighed with the sigh of those burdened with debt, or of the fervent servants of Allah, the revered ones, saying: "Behold me, I have stood amongst you in the stead of the bringer of tidings, and advised you with the advice of the zealous, and have entered with you on the path of those who guide aright, so be Thou my witness, O Allah, who art the best of witnesses." Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Then his eloquent discourse, conspicuous by its beauty, made us wonder, and our voices were raised to him in recitation. But my heart had from the sound of his voice a tinkling of knowledge of the true nature of his sun. So I said to him: "By Him who holds in bondage the fathomless sea, art thou not the Serûji?" He replied: "Aye, and how could the son of brightness remain hidden?" Forthwith I praised my voyage, and revealed my own self since he had revealed his, and we ceased not sailing, while the

sea was smooth, and the sky serene, and life pleasant, and our time a sport, and while I was delighted with meeting him, as the rich delights in his ingot of gold, and rejoiced in his converse, as the drowning man rejoices at being saved, until on a sudden the south wind blew fierce, and the sides [of the ship] bent [groaned], and the travellers forgot what had been, and the waves rushed against them from every quarter. Therefore we veered, on account of this recent calamity, towards one of the islands, to give rest [to our ship] and to rest ourselves, until the wind should calm down. The obstacle to our travelling on, however, continued, so that the provisions dwindled to a mere pittance. Then Abû Zayd said to me: "Look here, the gathering from the tree is not obtained by sitting still: so hast thou a mind to rouse our luck by going on land?" I replied to him: "Lo, I follow thee closer than thy shadow, and wait on thee more obediently than thy shoon." Accordingly we descended upon the island, despite the failing of our strength, to run the chase after provender, though neither of us twain owned a scrap, or was able to find a way in it, but we proceeded to scout within, and to seek shade in its shady places, until we came upon a lofty castle, with an iron gate, and a troupe of slaves in front. These we accosted, that we might make them a ladder to help us up, and a rope to draw water with, but we found every one of them mournful, deep in grief, so that we fancied them utterly broken or dragged into captivity. So we said to them: "O ye slave-boys, what is this sorrow?" But they answered not our call, and spoke not either fair or foul. When we saw that their fire was the fire of the glow-

worm, and their state as the mirage of the deserts, we said: "May their faces wax unsightly, and out upon the churl, and him who hopes aught of him!" Then hastened forward a servant whom old age had visited and weeping overcome, saying: "O ye folks, increase not our distress, and pain us not with reproach, for we are truly in sore anguish and in evil plight that makes us listless of talk." Said Abû Zayd to him: "Relieve thy choking sorrow, and speak out if thou have the power to speak, for thou wilt find at my hand a competent leech and a healing prescriber." He said: "Know thou, that the lord of this castle is the pole-star of this place, and the Shâh of this territory. Withal he is not free from grief on account of his being childless. So he ceased not paying honour to the seed-fields and selecting from the partners of his couch the most exquisite, until he was hailed with the happy tidings of the pregnancy of a noble lady, and his palm-tree gave promise of a shoot. Then vows were vowed in his behalf, and the days and months were counted, and when the time of delivery had come, and necklace and crownlet [for the adornment of the child] were fashioned, the throes of child-birth were severe, and fear was conceived for root and branch; therefore there is none of us who knows rest or tastes sleep save by snatches." Then he burst out weeping and wailed aloud, and repeatedly called on Allah unto whom we shall return. Thereupon Abû Zayd said to him: "Be still, O such a one, and of good cheer, and receive news of joy and proclaim them, for I possess a spell for child-birth, the fame of which is spread abroad amongst mankind." Forthwith the slaves hastened to their master,

announcing each other the release from their calamity, when it took no longer than to say "nay," that one sallied out who summoned us to him, and as soon as we had entered unto him, and were standing in his presence, he said to Abû Zayd: "For sooth thy reward will prosper thee if thy say is true and thy presage fails not." Abû Zayd bade them bring a mended reed-pen, and some meerschaum, and some saffron macerated in pure rose-water. In a breath's time they brought what he had asked for. Then he prostrated himself, rubbing his cheeks in the dust, and said praise to Allah, whose forgiveness he craved, bidding those present to stand off, and keeping them at a distance. Then he took the pen with a mighty show of fuss, and wrote upon the meerschaum with the saffron-solution:

"Child to come, list to one who warns thee beforehand, aye! and warning belongs to faith's foremost duties·

Thou art safe now within a home closely guarded, an abode from all misery well protected,

Nought thou seest there to frighten thee on the part of false a friend or a foeman frank in his hatred,

But as soon as thou salliest forth from its shelter thou alight'st in a dwelling hurtful and shameful,

Where the hardship awaiting thee will betide thee drawing tears from thy eyne in fast-flowing down-pour.

So continue thy easeful life and beware of changing things proved with things that are all uncertain,

Being heedful of one who seeks to beguile thee, that he hurl thee the surer in sorry torment.

Now I gave thee, upon my soul, fair advice, but sound advisers how often are they suspected."

Then he blotted out the writing unawares, besputtering it abundantly, and tied the meerschaum in a shred of silk, after having besprinkled it profusely with ambergris, and bade fasten it to the thigh of the

labouring womaṉ, but that the hand of none menstruous must touch it. Thereupon it took no longer than the taste [lasts on the palate] of drinking, or the interval that the milker makes in drawing the milk, when the body of the child slipped out, through the specific quality of the meerschaum, and the might of the One, the Eternal. Then the castle was filled with joy, and its thane and thralls were ready to fly with delight, and their throng surrounded Abû Zayd, singing his praises and kissing both his hands and deeming themselves blessed by the touch of his tattered garments, so that I was made to fancy him Uways Al-Ḳaranî or Dobays Al-Asadî. Thereupon he bestowed on him in presents of requital, and in abundant gifts that which poured wealth upon him, and brightened the face of his every wish, and his revenue ceased not to come in turn after turn, from the time the lamb was born, until safety was given back to the sea and our voyage to 'Omân became easy. Abû Zayd was contented with the largess received, and prepared for departure; the Wâlî [governor], however, would not allow him to move after he had experienced his blessing, but bade enrol him in his household, so that his hand might make free with his treasures. Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: When I saw that he inclined to where he might gain riches, I took to rebuking him and taunted him with the forsaking of his home and his intimate. He replied: "Off with thee and listen to me:

"To a native place cling not where folks oppress and hold thee in scant estee ,

But depart the land that exalts the low above the high in dignity,

And take thy flight to a safe retreat, although it were on the skirts of Kâf,

With a lofty soar, so as to dwell where naught of soilure attains to thee

And roam about in the world at will, and where thou choosest, select thy home,

Not thinking of thy haunts of old, nor breathing sighs for thy distant friends.

For know full well that a free-born man in his country meets but with disregard,

As the pearl is slighted within its shell and underrated its preciousness."

Thereupon he said: "Suffice thee what thou hast heard, and well done, if thou act accordingly." So I proffered to him my excuses, saying to him: "Make allowance for me," wherewith he accepted them, and excused himself, and provisioned me, stinting naught. Then he escorted me, as one escorts one's nearest relatives, until I had embarked in the boat, when I bade him good-bye, lamenting our separation, and deprecating it, wishing heartily the babe and its mother had come to grief.

THE FORTIETH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF TEBRÎZ."

This Assembly exhibits Abû Zayd in lively altercation with his handsome young wife before the Kadi of Tebrîz, he complaining of her contumacy, she of his abuse of his conjugal rights. Purists and Puritans will probably object to the tone of this composition. But in order to judge it equitably, it should not be forgotten that Ḥarîri is bent on exhausting all the stores, I will advisedly not say all the treasures, of his native language, of which he is justly proud, and the rich and sonorous vocabulary of invective, and even of obscenity, could not be entirely ignored by him. Moreover the grossness, nay coarseness of expression, with which a wonderful display of learning is here interspersed, is not represented as inherent in the characters, but as an assumed part with a view to a specific object. If the

two points are borne in mind, the unprejudiced reader cannot fail to admire this Assembly as one of the most original, amusing, and spirited pieces of the whole collection. The miserly Kadi, who by the astounding eloquence of the couple is reluctantly coaxed and partly frightened into an act of unwonted generosity, stands out, with his heartrending lamentations over the loss of his gold coins, as a worthy prototype of Shylock in Shakespear's "Merchant of Venice"

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I intended leaving Tebrîz at a time when it was unwholesome [irksome] for high and low, and empty of patrons and men of largess; and while I was making ready my travelling-gear and foraging for some company on the journey, I encountered there Abû Zayd, the Serûji, wrapped up in a cloak and surrounded by females. I asked him about his business, and whither he was bound with his bevy. Said he, pointing to a woman amongst them, fair of face, apparently in high dudgeon: "I had married this one, that she might make me forgetful of exile, and cleanse me from the squalor of celibacy; but I met from her with the sweat of [the carrier of] the water-bag, in that she now kept me out of my right, and now plied me beyond my strength, wherefore I am through her jaded with foot-soreness, and an ally to cark and choking care, and here we are on our way to the judge, that he may strike on the hand of the oppressor. So, if he arrange matters between us, let there be concord, but if not, a divorce, a divorce!" Then I inclined to ascertain to whom the victory would accrue, and what the upshot would be. So I put my present affair behind my back (in the Arabic idiom "behind my ear"), and accompanied the twain, though I should not be of any use. Now, when he was in the presence of the Kadi, who belonged to the number of those who

appreciate parsimony, and stint even tooth-pickings, Abû Zayd crouched on his knees before him, and said to him: "Behold, this my palfrey refuses the bridle, and is much given to bolting, although I am more obedient to her than her finger-tips, and fonder of her than her own heart." Then the Kadi said to her: "Woe betide thee, knowest thou not that stubbornness angers thy lord and master, and requires the lash?" Said she: "But, lo, he is of those who use to prowl behind the house, and to take the neighbour along with the neighbour." Then the Kadi said to him: "Out upon thee, sowest thou in the salt-marshes, and lookest out for chicks, where no chicks are to be got? May it never go well with thee, nor be thou safe from terror." Said Abû Zayd: "Lo by Him, who sends down the winds, she is more of a liar than Sajâḥi." Said she: "Nay! by Him, who has adorned the neck of the dove with a ring, and given wings to the ostrich, he is a worse liar than Abû Ṣamâmah, when he forged falsehoods in Tamâmah." Thereupon Abû Zayd hissed with the hiss of the flaring fire, and blazed up with the blaze of the enraged, saying: "Woe to thee, O thou slattern, O thou strumpet, O thou bane for thy husband and thy neighbour, art thou resolved in privacy to torment me, and showest off in public by giving me the lie? Yet thou knowest, that when I made thee a wife, and gazed at thee, I found thee uglier than a monkey, and drier than a strip of hide, and tougher than a palm-fibre, and more offensive than carrion, and more troublesome than the cholera, and dirtier than a menstrual cloth, and more barefaced than the bark of a tree, and colder than a winter night, and sillier than purslane (the plant

rijlah), and wider than the river Tigris. But I veiled thy blemish, and disclosed not thy disgrace, though, if Shîrîn had presented thee with her beauty, and Zobaydeh with her wealth, and Bilkîs with her throne, and Bûrân with her carpet, and Zebbâ with her kingcraft, and Rab'îah with her piety, and Khindaf with her nobility, and Khansâ with her poetry [such as she indited] upon [the death of her brother] Ṣakẖr, I would scorn thee for my saddle-seat or a filly fit for my stallion." Then the woman bristled up, and played the tigress, and bared her fore-arm, and tucked up her skirt, saying to him: "O thou, meaner than Mâdir, and more ill-omened than Kâshir, and more cowardly than Ṣâfir, and flightier than Ṭâmir, hurlest thou at me thy own shame, and thrustest thy knife into my honour, while thou knowest that thou art more contemptible than Kulâmeh, and more vicious than the mule of Abû Dulâmeh, and more indecent than a fart in company, and more out of place than a bug in a perfume box, supposing thou wert al-Ḥasan in his preaching and utterance, and ash-Sha'bî in his learning and memory, and al-Khalîl in his knowledge of prosody and grammar, and Jerîr in his love-song and lampoon, and Koss in his eloquence and address, and 'Abd al-Ḥamîd in his facundity and style of writing, and Abû 'Amr in his reading [of the Koran] and syntax, and Ibn Korayb in his tradition-lore from the Arabs, thinkest thou, that I should like thee as an Imâm for my prayer-niche, and a sword for my scabbard? Not I, by Allah, nor as door-keeper for my gate, or a stick to carry my wallet with." Said the Kadi to her: "I ee that ye twain are Shann and Ṭabaqah (or 'an old bag and its doubling'), and Ḥida'ah and Bunduqah

(or 'hawk and hunter'). So give over, man, the altercation, and enter in thy conduct on the level road; but as for thee, abstain from abusing him, and keep still when he comes to the house by its door." Then the woman said: "By Allah, I shall not hold back from him my tongue, until he clothes me, nor will I hoist for him my sail, unless he gives me enough to eat." Thereupon Abû Zayd swore with the three binding forms of oath, that he owned naught but his tattered rags. Thereupon the Kadi looked upon their story with the eye of the sharp-witted, and pondered with the thoughtfulness of the sagacious; then he approached the twain with a face that he made to look stern, and a buckler that he flourished, saying: "Suffices it not to you, to vilify each other in the judgment-hall, and to make bold of this offence, that you needs must proceed from the disgrace of mutual befoulment to the malice of defrauding each other? But I swear by Allah, the fundament of either of you has failed the ditch, and your arrow has missed the pit of the throat. For the Prince of the Faithful has appointed me to give judgment between litigants, not to pay the owings of debtors, and by the thanks due to his favour which has established me in this place, and conferred on me the power of binding and loosing, if ye explain not to me the truth of your case, and the hidden meaning of your deceit, I will surely proclaim the pair of you in the cities, and make an example of you for the wary." Abû Zayd looked down before him, as the serpent looks down, then he said to him: "Listen, listen!

"I am the man of Serûj, she my consort,—the full oon has none but the sun for equal,—

Her company and* mine are never severed, nor is her cloister distant from my abbot,

As naught I water but my own plantation; five nights, however, is it now since morning

And eve we wear the sorry garb of hunger, knowing no more what chewing means, or sipping,

So that from sheer exhaustion of our life-breath we are like corpses risen from the grave-yard.

. So, when our patience failed, and ev'ry comfort, we came by dint of want whose touch is painful,

To this resort, for good or evil venture, to gain, by hook or crook, some little money.

For poverty, when it assails the free-born, leads him to don the shameful cloak of falsehood.

This then is my condition, this y lesson, see my to-day and ask, what was my yestern.

And bid them mend my case or send to jail me at will, for in thy hand y weal and woe lies."

Then the Kadi said to him: "Cheer up and set thy heart at ease, for it is due to thee that thy fault should be condoned, and thy donation made plentiful." Thereupon his spouse jumped to her feet and drew herself up to her full length, and pointing [beckoning] to those present, said:

"O folks of Tebrîz, ye are blest with a judge who ranks by far ahead of all judges,

No fault in him save that his gift on a day of bounty is dealt out with short measure.

We came to him so that we might cull the fruit from off his tree that never fails yielding.

He sent away the Shaykh, rejoiced with his gift, and treated with regard and distinction,

But turned me off more disappointed than one who watches for the lightning in August,

As though he knew not that it is I who taught the Shaykh to versify with such glibness,

And that I could if ever I were so willed ake him the laughing-stock of all Tebrîz."

Said the narrator: Now when the Kadi saw the

stoutness of their hearts and the glibness [readiness] of their tongues, he perceived that he was visited through them with an incurable disease and a crushing [an overwhelming] calamity, and that if he gave to one of the spouses and turned off the other empty-handed, he would be like one who pays a debt with borrowed money and prays the sunset-prayer with two genu-flexions. So he frowned and knitted his brows, and raged and fumed, and hemmed and hawed; then he turned to the right and left, and twisted about in distress and regret, and began to abuse the office of a judge and its troubles, and counted up its bothers and vicissitudes, reviling one who seeks it and applies for it. Then he groaned as the despoiled one groans, and wailed until his wailing wellnigh made him appear abject, saying: "This indeed is an astounding thing! Am I in one place to be hit with two arrows, am I in one case made to deal with two debtors, am I able to please both litigants? Where from, I ask, where from?" Then he turned towards his Usher, the carrier out of his behests, and said: "This is not a day of judgment and delivery of sentences, and of decision and execution: this is a day of sorrow, this is a day that involves one in debt, this is a day of crisis, this is a day of loss, this is a day on which one is deprived of one's share, not given it. So rid me of these two babblers and silence their tongues with two gold coins. Then dismiss the company, and close the gate proclaiming that this is an ill-omened day and that the Kadi is in mourning on it, so that no litigant may come into my presence." Accordingly the Usher said the Amen to the Kadi's prayer, weeping along with him in response to his

weeping, whereupon he paid out to Abû Zayd and his spouse the two miṣqâls, and said: "I bear witness that ye twain are the most crafty amongst men and Jinn, but [henceforth] respect the court of judges, and eschew therein ribaldry of speech. For not every Kadi is a Kadi of Tebrîz and not at all times will people listen to doggerel rhyme." So they said to him: "There is not thy like of Ushers, and thanks are due to thee"; wherewith they got up and stalked away with their two gold-pieces, roasting the heart of the Kadi on two fires.

THE FORTY-FIRST ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF TANÎS."

On one of his travels Hârith has arrived in the old Egyptian town Tanîs, from which the Tanitic mouth of the river Nile derives its name, and he finds in its mosque an eloquent preacher surrounded by a numerous congregation, who listen attentively to his ser on full of lofty moral admonitions. The speaker exhorts his hearers in a powerful address, as usual first in rhymed prose, and subsequently in sonorous verse, with advancing age to abandon the pleasures of youth and worldly pursuits, to atone for their past transgressions by acts of piety and kindliness towards their fellow-creatures, and to ake provision from the wealth which they may have acquired on earth, by spending part of it in liberality to the poor. At the close of the discourse, which has moved many of those present to tears, a half-naked youth co es forward, who represents hi self in his destitute condition as a fit object on who to carry into practice the good intentions stirred up in the hearts of the assembly by the earnest words of the venerable Shaykh, and the preacher, on his part, endorses the boy's petition by so e additional re arks, calculated to rouse their compassion and sy - pathy for hi . Thus the supplicant reaps a plentiful harvest of bounties bestowed on hi , and exultingly walks away, well contented, and praising the generous dispositions of the inhabitants of Tanîs. The Shaykh also takes his departure, and Ḥârith, who thinks he possesses a clue to what is hidden fro the unsuspectin rest of the company, follows hi . When both have reached a

secluded spot, the former reveals himself as Abû Zayd, and as the father of the boy who has so successfully made application of the sermon delivered in his presence. It must be observed that Preston, who has translated this Assembly in his volume of Makâmât, stultifies it, by letting the boy himself refer to his relationship to the preacher There is nothing of the kind in the text, and the introduction of this gratuitous and unwarrantable interpolation entirely destroys the artistic merit of the composition.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related : I responded to the calls of wantonness in the bloom of my youth, wherefore I ceased not visiting dainty damsels and listening to the tunes of song, until the warner had arrived and the freshness of life had turned its back on me. Then I craved for rectitude of watchful conduct, and repented of what I had trespassed in the face of Allah. So I began to drive out evil inclinations by good deeds and to mend wicked ways before it was too late, for I turned from the morning-call on the fair, to meeting with the God-fearing and from mixing with songstresses to drawing near to men of piety, swearing that I would not associate but with him, who has rooted out error, and whose dissolute manners should have returned to the proper bend, and when I found one loose of rein long of sleep, I removed my abode far from his abode and fled from his scab and ignominy. Now when foreign travel had cast me into Tanîs, and made me alight at its homely [familiar] mosque, I saw therein a man surrounded by a dense circle and thronged spectators, who said with a stout heart and clear tongue: "Poor is the son of Adam, ay, how poor ! He relies upon the world, on that which is unreliable, and asks from it a stay by that which has no stability, and through his love for it he is slaughtered thereby with-

out a knife. He is addicted to it through his folly, and is rabid after it through his wretchedness, he hoards up in it through his boastfulness and makes no provision from it for his future state. I swear by Him who has poured out both the waters [sweet and salt, Koran, xxv. 55], and lit up the twain, sun and moon, and exalted the might of the two [holy] stones, if the son of Adam were wise, he would not revel in drinking-bouts, and if he bethought himself of what went before, he would weep blood, and if he were mindful of the requital, he would strive to overtake that which escaped his grasp, and if he looked at the issue he would better the turpitude of his actions. O wonder of all wonders at him who plunges into the abode of fire, while he treasures gold and hoards up riches for his descendants. Again, it is of marvels unheard-of that, though the interspersion [sprinkling] of hoariness warn thee, and thy sun proclaim its setting, yet thou seest not fit to turn, and to cleanse thee from thy blamefulness." Then he broke forth inditing, as inditeth one who leads aright:

"Woe to the man who warned by his hoariness still blindly rushes along on youth's folly bent,

And glances back on pleasure's fire longingly when all his limbs already from weakness shake,

Who rides the steed of wantonness, which he deems a softer couch than chamberlains ever spread,

Not awed by hoary hair which no an of sense sees come without its starry light startling him,

Nor to himself forbidding what right forbids, or heeding aught that may impair fair repute.

Ay, such a man, away with hi if he die, and if he live, he's reck'ed as though not alive,

No good in him: alive he breathes fulsomeness, as though a corpse, ten days exhumed after death.

But hail to him whose honour sheds fragrance sweet, bright in its spotless beauty like broidered gown.

So say to him whom stings the thorn of his sin, pluck out the thorn, poor brother, else thou art lost.

Wipe with sincere repentance out any writ that black misdeeds have left on thy book of deeds,

And deal with men of ev'ry kind pleasantly, winning with courtly ways alike fool and sage;

Feather the free whose plumage fair time has stripped, may he not live who, while he can, feathers not.

Help one oppressed by tyranny · if too weak to help thyself, then summon up hosts for him,

And raise him who when he has tripped, calls on thee, haply through him thou risest on gathering-day.

This cup of counsel, drink of it, and bestow on one athirst that which remains in the cup."

Now when he had concluded his tear-provoking sentences and finished the recital of his verses, there rose a lad to his feet, in the freshness of his youth, bare of body, and said : " O ye men of discretion, who listen to injunctions, you have apprehended what has been indited, and understood what has been directed : so, whoever of you intends to accept [the proffered advice], and to mend his future, let him by his beneficence towards me manifest his intention, not withholding from me his largess. For by Him who knows all things secret, and condones obduracy in transgression, my hidden state is like what ye behold of me, and my face is well worthy of being spared shame : so aid me that ye may have aid conferred on you." Then the Shaykh held forth what might dispose their hearts kindly towards him, and make easy for him the attainment of his wish, until his well came upon a spring and his desert-soil was covered with green-food. So when his pouch was right full, he hied away with a swagger, and

singing the prais s of Tanîs. But the Shaykh pleased no further stay, after the youth had retreated. He bade them raise their hands in prayer, and turned to his homeward way. Said the narrator: Now I was on the alert to test him, and solve his mystery. So I followed him while he strode apace on his road, and vouchsafed not to break his silence. But when he felt secure of any sudden intruder and confidential talk became possible, he turned his neck to me, and greeted me with the greeting of joyful recognition, and said: "Wast thou pleased with the sharpness of that fawn?" Said I · "Ay, by the Faithful, the Guardian." He said: "Lo, he is the youngster of the Serûji, by Him who brings the pearl from out the deep." Then I said: "I [dare] testify that thou art the tree on which his fruit has grown, and the fire from which his spark has sprung." So he confessed to the truth of my surmise, and was gratified that I disclosed my identity. Then he said: "Hast thou a mind to hasten with me to the house, so that we may pledge each other with the cup of the ruddy wine?" But I said to him: "Woe to thee! Will ye enjoin what is right upon others, and forget your own souls?" (Koran, ii. 41). He displayed his teeth, smiling at me, and passed on without demur. Then it occurred to him to turn back to me, and he said:

"Drive cark and care away with wine unalloyed, and cheer thy heart, not pining with fretful grief,
And say to hi who blames thee for warding off the pang of pain: 'Enough of thee, get thee gone!'"

Then he said. "As for me, I am going where I may quaff my morning and evening draught, and if thou

wilt not come with me and accord with the mirthful, thou art no companion for me, and thy road is not my road. So step out of my way and turn aside from it, and pry and spy not after me." Forthwith he turned his back on me and went, without casting a glance behind him. Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Then I burnt with grief at his departure and fain would not have met him.

THE FORTY-SECOND ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF NAJRÂN."

The scene of this Assembly, as the title indicates, is Najrân, a celebrated town of Yemen, in Mohammed's time chiefly inhabited by Christians, whose bishop Ḳoss became proverbial for eloquence and is said to have originated the famous phrase *ammâ ba'd* (and now to proceed), the formula of transition from the introductory prayer or preliminary remarks to the principal subject of a discourse.

Al Hârith, while making a prolonged stay in this city, meets with an assembly of people engaged in proposing riddles. An old man, who joins them, taunts them with the futility of their pursuit, but when he perceives that his remarks have provoked their violent anger, he appeases and at the same time dumfounds them, by ten riddles of his own co position. These riddles hold the middle between those of the thirty-sixth Assembly, which are of the nature of our conundrum, and the enigmatical descriptions of the eighth, the early part of the twenty-ninth and the thirty-fifth, and are like these largely interspersed with plays on words which frequently render a readable translation exceedingly difficult. Mr. Chenery in his summary of the last twenty-four Assemblies adduces the following instance (vol. i., p. 81), which we reprint in order to give the reader an opportunity of comparing his translation of the passage with the metrical rendering attempted in these pages:

"What is he, who weds two sisters, both openly and secretly, but none accuses him for it?

When he visits the one, he visits also the other; and though husbands may be partial, he is not so.

He increases his visits as his wives grow grey: now this is an affection rare among husbands."

The answer to this is the pencil used to place the *kohl*, or ointment on the eyes: the two eyelids are the wives, each of which it anoints at the same time without partiality, and as they grow old, the necessity for anointing them increases."

Our translation of the riddle runs·

What groom is it who weds, both in secret and openly, two sisters, and no offence at his wedlock is ever found?

When waiting on one, he waits as well on the other eke: if husbands be partial, no such bias is seen in him;

His attentions increase, as the sweethearts are growing grey, and so does his largess: what a rare thing in married men!

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: The castings of travel and the by-paths of inclination used to throw me about, until I became a son of every soil and a brother of every foreign land, save that I crossed no valley, nor witnessed any Assembly, unless I fetched light from the torch of learning that consoles for griefs, and raises the worth of man, so that the habit was known of me, and became the tale of tongues with regard to me, cleaving closer to me than love to the Benû 'Uẓrah, and bravery to the race of Abû Ṣufrah. Now when I had made for a while a stay at Najrân and selected there my friends and neighbours, I took its assemblies for my visiting-place, and for the resort of my sportive recreation and my night-talk, being assiduous in my attendance at them morn and eve, and seeing therein both what rejoices the heart and distresses it. Once while I was in a thronged assembly and a concourse densely crowded, there crouched before us an aged man, burdened with senility, who greeted after the fashion of a beguiler's greeting, with a glib tongue, whereupon he said: "O ye full moons of gatherings, and seas of bounties, forsooth the morning-light is evident to him who has two eyne, and beholding holds the stead of two

witnesses. So what see you fit to do in what you see [of my state]: will you vouchsafe help, or recede when ye are called upon?" Said they: "By Allah, thou hast provoked wrath, and while thy wish has been to [open a spring] make spring the water, thou hast caused it to sink away." Then he conjured them by Allah to tell him from what he had interrupted them, so that he made it incumbent upon them to answer. So they said: "We were vying in proposing riddles, as people vie in shooting arrows on a day of battle." Then he refrained not from vilifying their missile, and treating this feat as a futile thing. Forthwith the tongue-gifted of the people railed at him and tilted at him with the lances of reproach, and he began to excuse himself for his slip, and to repent of his speech while they persisted in upbraiding him, and responded to the war-cry of his contention, until he said to them: "O my good people, forbearance is part of generosity of disposition: abstain then from taunt and foul abuse, rather come on that we may riddle together, and let him be judge who excels." Thereupon the fire of their rage subsided, and their anger was allayed. They agreed to what he stipulated against them and for them, and desired him to be the first of them. Then he kept back as long as a boot-lace may be tied, or a saddle-girth fastened, when he said: "Listen, may ye be preserved of levity, and given your fill of life's enjoyment," and he indited riddling upon a ventilating-fan of canvas (punkah):

"A aiden I know, brisk, full of speed in her ministry, returning the sa e track that she went by when starting off:

A driver she has, kinsman of hers, who is urging her, but while he thus is speeding her on, is her help ate too.

In summer she is seen dew-besprinkled and moist and fresh, when summer is gone, her body shows flabby and loose and dry."

Then he said: "Here is another for you, O ye lords of excellence, and centres of intellect," and indited riddling upon the rope of palm-fibre:

"A son there is of a mother fair, whose root has sprung from her lofty plant:
He hugs her neck, though for some time, she had erewhile discarded him:
He who reaps her beauty ascends by eans of hi and none forbids and blames."

Then he said: "Here is another for you, hidden of signification and fraught with obscurity," and indited, riddling upon the reed-pen:

"One split in his head it is through who 'the writ' is known, as honoured recording angels take their pride in him;
When given to drink he craves for ore, as though athirst, and settles to rest when thirstiness takes hold of hi ;
And scatters tears about him when ye bid hi run, but tears that sparkle with the brightness of a smile."

Then he said: "Take this one also, clear of indication, and perspicuous of expression," and indited riddling upon the kohl-pencil:

"What groom is it who weds, both in secret and openly, two sisters, and no offence at his wedlock is ever found?
When waiting on one, he waits as well on the other eke: if husbands are partial, no such bias is seen in him;
His attentions increase as the sweethearts are growing grey, and so does his largess: what a rare thing in married men!"

Then he said: "Again this one, O ye men of understanding and standards of learning," and indited riddling upon the water-wheel:

"One restless, although firmly fixed, bestowing gifts, not working mischief,
Now plunging, now uprising again, a arvel how he sinks and soars:

He pours down tears as one oppressed, yet is his fierceness to be feared:

For then he brings destruction on, although his inmost heart is pure."

Said the narrator: Now, when he had launched forth the five which he had strung together he said: "O my good people, ponder these five and close your five upon them, then as you please gather your skirts [for departure], or accept an increase from the same measure." Then the desire for more made it a light matter for the people to be taxed with dulness. So they said to him: "Our comprehension falls short of thy sharpness, so as to disable us to draw sparks from thy fire-shaft, and to discern the lineaments of thy blade: so if thou wilt make the ten full, it rests with thee." Then he rejoiced with the rejoicing of one whose arrow has hit, and whose adversary has been silenced, whereupon he opened his speech [with the words] in the name of Allah, and indited riddling upon the cooling-vessel:

"One veiled as if sorrowful, and gladsome withal to see, although she alike of grief and of joy is unconscious.

Approached for her offspring sake at times, and how any times a wife would be divorced were it not that she has a child.

At times she is discarded, though unchanged in all her ways: discarding one unaltered in manners is cruelty.

When nights begin to shorten we relish her intercourse, as soon as they grow longer we care not for her embrace.

Her outward attire is showy [pleasing], disdained is her under-cloth, but why should we disdain that which wisdo approveth of?

Then he showed his yellow dog-teeth, and indited riddling upon the finger-nail:

"One of whose sharpness I fight shy, he grows without either food, or drink:

Seen during Ḥajj, he disappears on offering-day, how strange to tell!"

Then he looked askance as looketh the Ifrit, and indited riddling upon the sulphur-match :

"And who is the slighted one, sought and rejected in turns, though well thou knowest thou canst not spare her:
She has two heads of most perfect resemblance, though one of the is opposite the other:
If both are painted, she is put to torture, but spurned without the paint, and recked for nothing."

Then he roared with the roar of the stallion, and indited riddling upon the milk of the vine-tree:

"What is the thing, that when it corrupts, its error turns to righteousness,
And when its qualities are choice it stirs up ischief where it appears:
Its parent is of pure descent, but wicked that which he begets."

Then he placed his travelling staff beneath his arm, and indited riddling upon a goldsmith's balance :

"One flighty and leaning with one half to one side, but no an of sense will upbraid him for either:
He always is raised up on high as a just king is rightly exalted for aye in his station
Alike are to hi both the pebble and nugget, though truth should in no wise be balanced with falsehood.
And ost to be wondered at in his description, if people regard hi with eyes of discernment,
Is that by his judgment the parties abide, though they know him as flighty by nature, and partial."

Said the narrator: Thereupon their thoughts were wandering in the vales of fancies and straying as the love-crazed strayeth, until time waxed long and looks grew sad. So when he saw that they rubbed the fire-shafts and no spark sprang forth, and that they consumed the day in barren wishes, he said : "O my good people, until when will ye consider and how long will ye delay? Has the time not come for that the hidden

should be disclosed, or the ignorant should surrender ?" So they said : "By Allah thou hast tied it hard, and set up the net and caught the game : rule then, as thou wilt, and get the booty and renown." Then he fixed for every riddle a fee and claimed it from them in ready cash. Forthwith he opened the locks, and set a mark on every [head] piece of his cattle, and wished to decamp. But the headman of the people laid hold on him and said to him : "No dissembling after this day, and tell thy pedigree before thou goest, and reck this as the dowry of divorce." Then he looked down sulkily, so that we said "He is of doubtful birth," whereupon he indited while his tears were flowing :

"Serûj the place where my sun rose, the home of my joy and comfort,
But now bereft of her pleasures, of all my soul took delight in,
I had to change her for exile, embittering past and present :
No biding-place have on earth I, no rest there is for my camel.
My morn, my eve pass on one day in Nejd, in Syria another,
I drag my life out with food that dejects the heart, vile and abject,
No copper-coin own I ever ;—a coin ! from who should I get it ?
Who lives a life such as I live, has bought it at losing bargain."

Then he put the select of the money into his belt, and went to wander on the face of the earth. We conjured him to return, and made him great our promises, but by [the life of] thy father, he never came back and our desire for him booted not.

THE FORTY-THIRD ASSEMBLY, CALLED "AL-BAKRÎYAH."

In this Assembly Abû Zayd displays his eloquence and mastery of the Arabic tongue in various ways. Ḥaḍramowt in Ye en being celebrated both for its camel-breed and its cordwainery, the use of terms which might equally well apply to a young camel or a sandal, gives rise to an adventure, of which Abû Zayd renders a spirited

account. Al Hârith, as usually amused and charmed by his friend's descriptive powers, asks him whether he had ever met his equal in the gift of speech. Abû Zayd readily answers in the affirmative, and relates how once he was about to marry, but in the last moment grave doubts occurred to him as to the advisability of the step. After a sleepless night, passed in pondering anxiously the reasons for and against, he resolves early in the morning to go out and consult the first whom he would encounter. This happens to be a youth, a most unlikely person to speak authoritatively on the subject; he, however, keeping to his resolution, states his case, and when the lad inquires from him whether he had a maiden or a matron in view, he says that he has not made up his mind on the point, but was willing to abide by the decision of his interlocutor. The latter at once pictures with a celebrated modern debater's skill first the white and then the black of either class of ladies, and when Abû Zayd, bewildered by his contradictory ruling, suggests that under the circumstances it might be safer to become a monk, he again confuses him, by severely condemning celibacy and extolling the advantages of matrimony, and finally leaves Abû Zayd more in doubt than ever, but determined not to consult striplings again on a question of home-rule. Hârith, however, shrewdly guesses that the stripling is fictitious, and the whole debate improvised by the Shaykh, as a fresh feat of his consummate art, which leads him to speak with effusion in praise of learning and literary accomplishments. Abû Zayd demurs that nowadays learning is only appreciated when backed up by wealth and high birth, and soon finds occasion to prove his assertion in a lively dialogue with a youthful inhabitant of a village on their road. While thus the enthusiastic Ḥârith is forced to acknowledge that erudition fetches less than nothing in the market of a deteriorated world, the unscrupulous Abû Zayd sees in the fact a sufficient excuse for himself to swindle, for a parting shot, his friend out of a more saleable commodity.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: Peregrination that casts a man about, and troublesome travel had wafted me to a tract where the experienced guide would lose his way, and the venturesome be seized with terror, and I met with that which the bewildered and lonely meet with, and saw sights that I had loathed, though I made stout my frightened heart and urged on my jaded

beast, journeying forth as one who throws both divining arrows and resigns himself to destruction, and I ceased not trotting and cantering and traversing mile after mile until the sun was nigh setting and light veiling itself, when I conceived fear because of the downfall of darkness and the onslaught of the host of Ḥam [the father of blackamoors], and knew not whether to gather my skirts and tether, or to face the night and grope my way. Now while I was revolving in my mind for what I should decide myself, there appeared to me the form of a camel in the shelter of a mountain, and I hoped it to be the riding-beast of one taking rest, and made for it cautiously. Then my surmise proved soothsay, and the riding-beast a swift dromedary, whose resting master was wrapped up in his striped cloak and drowned in sleep. So I sat beside his head until he awoke from his drowse; then when his lamps were lit (*i.e.*, his eyes opened), and he saw who had suddenly come upon him, he started back, as starts the suspicious, and said: "[Is it] thy brother or the wolf?" Said I: "Nay, one groping in the night, who has lost his way: so give me light, that I also may strike it for thee." He replied: "Let thy anxiety be at rest, for thou hast many a brother whom thy mother bore not." Then my fear departed, and sleepfulness came to my eyne. But he said: "In the morning people praise night-faring; seest thou then fit what I see fit?" Said I: "Behold, I am more obedient to thee than thy shoon, and agree better with thee than thy food." Then he commended my friendly disposition, and hailed my companionship applaudingly, whereupon we saddled our beasts in haste and set out on our night-travel, and we ceased not to

speed our faring and to battle against sleep until the night had reached her end and morning raised his standard, and when the dawn broke and naught remained that was not clearly visible, I scanned the features of my mate in the journey, and the partner in my night-talk, when, lo, it was Abû Zayd, the object of the seeker's desire and the road-sign of the rightly guided. Then we bestowed on each other the greeting of two lovers who have met after separation, whereupon we communed our secrets and intimated our mutual tidings, my camel groaning with fatigue, while his mount flitted along with the flitting [fleetness] of the young ostrich. I wondered at the strength of her build and the extent of her [power of] endurance. So I began to descry her mettle, and asked him whence he had chosen her. Said he: "Ay, this camel has a story sweet to listen to, and pleasant to relate. So if thou likest to hear thereof, make a halt, and if thou art not so minded, then hearken not." Thereupon I made my jaded beast kneel down for him to speak, and made my ear a target for what he had to narrate. Said he: "Know that I had her exhibited to me for sale at Ḥaḍramowt, and I endured death-pangs to acquire her, and I ceased not faring on her over the lands, and treading with her hoofs the sharp stones [or flints], until I found her doughty for travels, and a provision for the time of stay (on account of her abundance of milk), whom no fatigue overcame, with whom no stout camel kept pace, and who knew not what pitch is. Accordingly I made her my mainstay for good and evil, and held her in the place of one who benefits and gives joy. Now it happened that she had strayed some little while since, and

I had no other mount. So I was overwhelmed with grief and well-nigh undone, forgetting every calamity that had gone before, and remaining three days without being able to travel on, and without tasting sleep but a little at a time. Then I began to follow up the roads and to explore the pastures and the halting-stages, but I got no wind of her, nor the quiet of despair, and whenever I reminded me of her fleetness and her readiness to vie with the birds, the remembrance sickened me and the thought thereof crazed me. One day, while I was in the tent-village of some clan, I heard a distant person, and an isolated voice [crying out]: 'Who has lost a mount hailing from Ḥadramowt, one easy of step, her hide is marked, and her blemish has been cut short, and her bridle is plaited, and her back is though it had been broken and reset. She adorns her who travels thereon and furthers the journey at the oncoming of night, and keeps always close to thee, weariness comes not near her, and footsoreness befalls her not, she needs no stick, and resists not him who treats her roughly.'" Said Abû Zayd: "Then the voice drew me towards the caller, and gave me glad tidings of the recovery of my lost one, and when I came up to him and had made salutation to him, I said to him: 'Give over the mount, and take thy guerdon.' Said he: 'And what is thy mount, may thy error be forgiven thee?' I said: 'A camel whose body is like a hillock, and her hump like a dome, and her milk the fill of the pail, and I would have been given twenty [dînârs] for her, when I alighted at Yabrîn, and asked more from the bidder, and knew that he was mistaken [in not buying her].' Then he turned from me when he heard my description, and

said: 'Thou art not the owner of my trove.' Thereupon I took hold of his collar, and persisted in giving him the lie, and strove to tear his garments, while he said: 'O such a one, my mount is not that which thou seekest for, so withhold from thy rashness, and give over thy abuse, or else sue me before the judge of this tribe, who is not liable to error, and if he adjudges her to thee, take her, but if he denies her to thee, jabber no more.' Then I saw no cure [or remedy] for my affair, and no way out of my anxiety, but to repair to the judge, even though he should cuff me. So we hastened [or sped] to a Shaykh, stoutly erect, with handsome headgear, concerning whom one could perceive that the birds might perch quietly on him, and that he was not unjust. Thereupon I broke forth complaining of ill-use, and lamenting, while my companion was silent, not moving his lips, until, when I had emptied my quiver, and finished my say, he brought out a sandal, heavy of weight, ready for the road on rough ground, and said: 'This is she whom I designated, and her I described, and if it is she from whom he expected twenty, there he is with his eyes open; consequently he has lied in his claim, and it is an abomination what he has falsely put forth, by Allah, else let him stretch out his nape, and show plainly the truth of what he has said.' Then the judge said: 'Oh Allah, [I crave] thy forgiveness,' and he began to turn the sandal this side and that side, whereupon he said: As for this sandal, it is my sandal, and as for thy mount, it is in my dwelling, so get thee up to take thy camel, and do good according to thy power.' Then I rose, and said:

"I swe it by the ancient house, the worshipful, and those who circumambulate the holy fane,

Thou art a good man to appeal for justice to; the best of Kadis judging amongst Arab tribes,
So live as long as camels speed the pilgrims on."

Then he replied without deliberation and on the spur of the moment, saying:

"Allah reward thee for thy thanks, dear nephew mine, though I exact no thanks as ever due to me,
For worst of men is he who wrongs, when made a judge, and who, when made trustee of aught, betrays his trust,
These twain I reckon with the dog alike in worth."

Thereupon he ordered one into my presence, to hand over to me my camel, without snubbing me for his favour, and I went away successful in my suit, and trailing the skirt of joy, calling out: "How marvellous!"—Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm. Then I said to him: "By Allah! thou hast told a wonderful tale, and been lavish in thy praise on a subject thou knowest well. [Tell me] I conjure thee by Allah, hast thou ever found one more gifted with the sorcery of eloquence than thyself, and a finer craftsman in fashioning the jewellery of speech?" He replied: "By Allah, yea, listen therefore and enjoy [what thou wilt hear]. I had intended, at a time when I made for Tihâmeh, on taking a wife to myself, so that she might be a helpmate to me. Now when the resident proxy [for the conduct of the marriage negotiation] had been instructed, and the affair was all but concluded, I bethought myself with the thoughtfulness of one who guards against a mistake, and considers carefully where the arrow may fall, passing my night in communing with my tortured heart, and revolving my wavering resolve, until I decided that I would go out early in the morning and consult the first whom I saw. So when dark-

ness had drawn in her tent-ropes, and the stars had turned their tails, I sallied forth in the morning like one who seeks a stray beast, and was early with the earliness of the diviner from the flight of birds. Then I encountered a youth, whose face pleaded in his favour, wherefore I augured well from his cheering aspect and wished to take light from his views on matrimony. Said he: 'Wishest thou her to be a matron, or a maid that gives trouble?' I replied: 'Choose thou for me what thou seest fit, I have put the matter in thy hands (lit. thrown the loops or handles to thee)." Then he said: 'To me then belongs the explanation, and on thee devolves the application, so listen, may I be thy ransom after the burial of thy enemies: as for the virgin, she is a treasured pearl, and a hidden egg, an early fruit ripe for gathering, and a must that agrees well with thee, a fresh meadow, and a necklace costly and precious, none has soiled her with his touch, and no intimate has come near her, no wanton has plied her, and no deflowerer has despoiled her. She has a face suffused with shame, and a bashful eye, her tongue is faltering, and her heart is pure; withal she is a playful puppet, and a sportive doll, a frolicsome gazelle, and accomplished gracefulness, a jewelled belt bright and new, and a sharer of thy couch that rejuvenates, not renders hoary. But for the matron: she is the trained steed, the ready morsel, the desire made easy, one who has gained knowledge by repeated practice; the fond companion and confidential friend, the skilful and well advised, the intelligent and experienced; moreover, she is the hasty meal of the rider, slip-knot for the suing proxy [or suitor], an easy mount for

the enfeebled, a booty swiftly snatched by the combatant; her disposition is gentle, her bonds are light to bear, her inward state is clearly manifest, and her service adorns; and I swear by Allah, that I have been truthful in both descriptions, and have displayed the two kinds, by which of the twain is thy heart enraptured, and which rouses thy lust (on which of them stands thy carnal desire)?'" Said Abû Zayd: "Then I saw that he was a stone against which the adversary must be on his guard, and by which the cupping-places of the veins are made to bleed, save that I said: 'I had heard that the virgin is stronger in her love, and less given to wiles.' Said he: 'Upon my life, this has been said indeed, but how many a say has done harm. Woe betide thee, she is a filly refusing the bridle, and the mount tardy to be tamed, the fire-shaft difficult to strike from, and the fortress hard to conquer; moreover, the provision she requires is plentiful, and the help she affords is scanty, her enjoyment is savourless, and her coquettishness provoking, her hand is clumsy, her temper a snake that will not be charmed, and her disposition froward, her night is a long and dark night forsooth [her night is a night indeed]; to break her in is a heavy task, and to know her needs the lifting of a screen, and oftentimes she puts the combatant to shame, and is averse to the sportive, and angers one inclined to toy, and humbles the experienced stallion; moreover, it is she who says: "I dress and sit in company, so I seek one who holds and spends."' Said I to him: 'What then thinkest thou of the matron, O father of all that is sweet?' He replied: 'Woe betide thee! listest thou for the remnant of the dishes, and the

residue of the watering-ponds? for draggled garments and worn-out vessels? For one dainty, who browses on every pasture? One lavish of expenditure, a spend-thrift, an impudent shrew? One grasping and never satisfied? Moreover, all her talk is: "I was and have become, erewhile when I was wronged I had given me help, but what a difference between to-day and yester-day, and where is the moon beside the sun?" [Listest thou for her] though she be always bewailing [her former husband], and blest [with adult sons], and withal a bold-faced wanton; she is a collar [round a man's neck] that breeds vermin and an ulcer that never cicatrizes.' Then I said to him: 'Art thou of opinion that I should become a monk, and enter on that path of conduct?' Thereupon he chid me with the chiding of one who rails at the slip of his pupil, saying: 'Woe to thee, wilt thou follow in the track of the monks, when the truth has been manifest? Fy on thee and the weakness of thy understanding, out upon thee and them! Showest thou thyself up as though thou hadst not heard that there is no monkery in Islâm, and hadst not been told of the wedlocks of thy Prophet, may purest peace be upon him? Or knowest thou not that a good helpmate puts thy house in order, and obeys thy voice, sobers thy sight, and brings thy fame into good odour? Through her thou beholdest the coolness of thy eye, and the flower sweet to thy nostrils, and the joy of thy heart, and the lastingness of thy memory, and the solace of thy day and morrow (all this meaning offspring). How then art thou verse to the ordinance of the sent ones, and the enjoyment of the wedded, and the path of the guarded, and that

which draws forth wealth and sons? By Allah, ill pleases in thee, what I have heard from thy mouth.' Then he turned from me as one enraged, and bounded aside with the bound of the locust. Said I to him: 'Allah curse thee! Wilt thou strut jauntily away and leave me bewildered?' Said he: 'I suspect thou pretendest goodness, and indulgest thyself a bit, so that thou mayest dispense with a damsel exacting a big dowry.' Said I to him: 'Allah confound thy suspicion, and allow not thy generation to grow old.' Whereupon I went away from him shamefacedly, and repented of consulting striplings." Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, continued: Then I said to him: "I swear by Him who has planted the forests that this controversy was carried on by thee and with thee (*i.e.*, between thee and thy own self)." So he burst out laughing exceedingly, and rejoiced with the glee of the thoroughgoing, whereupon he said: "Lick up the honey and ask no questions." Then I began to expatiate in the praise of learning, and to exalt its owner above the possessor of riches. But he glanced at me with the glance of one who taxes with ignorance, and winked at me indulgently, and when I waxed excessive in my partiality for the learned fraternity, he said to me: "Hush, hear from me and inwardly digest:

"They say that a man's chief adornment and pride, and his beauty is learning deep-rooted, sound,

Alas, it adorns but the wealthy and hi , whose su mit of lordship is rising aloft:

But as for the poor man I reckon for him far better than learning a loaf and a stew.

What beauty bestows it on hi , if they say: a scholar, a school-drudge, or may be a clerk."

Thereupon he said: "Presently there will become evident to thee the truth of my assertion, and the illustration of my argument." So we travelled on with unfailing strength and without flagging in our exertion, until the journey brought us to a village, may the good keep aloof from it, and forthwith we entered it to forage for provender, for we were both of us short of provisions. Now we had not reached the halting-place, and the spot assigned for the kneeling down of the camels, before a lad met us, who had not known yet [or grown up to the state of] sin, with a bundle of grass on his shoulder. Abû Zayd greeted him with the salutation of the Moslem, and asked him to stand still, and give information. Said he: "And of what wishest thou to ask, may Allah prosper thee." He said: "Are here fresh dates sold for discourses?" He replied: "No, by Allah." Said he: "Nor green dates for witticisms?" He replied: "Certainly not, by Allah." Said he: "Nor fruit for night-talk?" He replied: "Far from it, by Allah." Said he: "Nor honey-fritters for poems?" He replied: "Be silent, may Allah preserve thee!" Said he: "Nor bread in broth for choice verses?" He replied: "Whither stray thy wits, may Allah guide thee aright." Said he: "Nor sifted flour for subtle sayings?" He replied: "Give over with this, may Allah restore thy senses." But Abû Zayd took pleasure in reiterating question and reply, and measuring out from this self-same sack, and the youth perceived that the goal of his talk was distant, and that the Shaykh was a devilkin. So he said: "Let this suffice thee, O Shaykh, I know now what is thy drift, and see clearly thy quiddity. Take

then thy answer in a lump, and be satisfied with it for thy ken: In this place poetry fetches not a barley-corn, nor prose a bread-crumb, nor a narrative nail-parings, nor a treatise slop-water, nor the wise maxims of Lokmân a mouthful of food, nor the history of battles a morsel of meat, for, as for the people of this age, there is none amongst them who bestows a gift when an encomium has been fashioned for him, none who gives a reward when a poem has been recited to him, none who shows himself bountiful when a tale has diverted him, none who provides support, though he be a prince, and with them the learned is like a waste spring-dwelling: if no rain falls in abundance thereon, it has no value, and no beast approaches it; and in like manner learning, if no wealth abets it, its study is a weary toil, and its profit a fagot." Thereupon he departed in haste, and went off and ran away. Said Abû Zayd to me: "Art thou aware now, that learning is slack, and its whilom aiders have turned their backs on it?" Then I admitted the sharpness of his sagacity, and resigned myself to the decree of necessity. Said he: "Let us by this time leave off discussion, and dive into the chapter of platters: know that adorned speeches satisfy not him who is a-hunger, and what is thy advice with regard to what keeps back the last gasp and quenches the fire of the entrails?" I replied: "The command stands with thee, and the reins are in thy hand." Said he: "I opine that thou shouldst pawn thy sword to satisfy thy gut and thy guest: so give it to me and tarry here, that I may return to thee with something to swallow." Now I took his proposal in good faith, and invested him with the sword and the pledge, and he

lagged not to mount his camel, and to violate truth and trustiness. I stayed a long time waiting for him, then I got me up to follow him, but I was like one whose milk has run short in summer, and met neither him nor my sword.

THE FORTY-FOURTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "THE WINTRY."

This Assembly contains a series of puzzling statements, made by Abû Zayd in a circle of guests, who on a cold winter night warm themselves at the fire and enjoy the profuse hospitality of a generous entertainer. The intelligibleness of these statements, like that of the legal questions of the thirty-second Assembly, depends on the double meaning of the terms in which they are worded. Apparently, therefore, they refuse translation into any other language, which cannot supply similar ambiguities, but it must not be forgotten that the more recondite meanings of the several idioms require explanation even to the average Arab, who is not initiated in all the subtleties of his other-tongue, and notably in this particular instance the English reader, who consults the short notes, attached to each puzzle, has even the advantage over Abû Zayd's audience. For the wily Shaykh amuses himself by secretly departing in the middle of the night, without vouchsafing to his fellow-guests the interpretation promised for the morning, and probably thinking that his noble and presumably highly cultured host does not need it He who has made himself acquainted with the hidden meanings, and then once more peruses the *double-entendres* in their entirety, can scarcely fail to be vastly delighted by the string of see ing absurdities and contradictions, which, moreover, in the Arab original forms a poetical composition with the same rhyme running through the whole. While adhering as much as possible to the metre, the translator had, as in all other poetical passages of the work, to renounce this adorn ent, and be contented with occasional alliterations and assonances.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I came in a night of deepest darkness, black of locks, upon a fire kindled on a mountain-top, and giving tidings of

liberality, and it was a night whose sky was cold, her bosom closely buttoned, veiled her stars and her misty gloom heaped up. I was colder in it than the eye of the chameleon, and a mangy goat, so I urged on my sturdy camel, saying "Hail to thee and my own soul!" until the kindler [of the fire] spied my person and became aware of my speedy faring, when he came down in hot haste, and indited in the rejez metre:

"Long life to thee, groping along thy nightly way, whom sheen of fire has shown, nay, brought him as a gift,
To one of a ple bounty and of vast abode, who welcomes, as the iser welcomes golden coin,
Nightfarers seeking hospitable fare and who evades not visitors with 'not at home,'
No tardy one to entertain in friendly guise a guest, when all the ground is bound with wintry cold,
And storm-portending stars are stingy with their rain. Well is he wont to ward against the ills of time:
He gathers ashes, sharpens knives, and never fails, be it in day-ti e or at night, at morn or eve,
To slaughter well-fed camels, and to kindle fire."

Then he accosted me with the countenance of the bashful and clasped my hands with the clasp of the generous, and led me into a house whose camels roared, whose cauldrons boiled, whose slave-girls carried provisions, whose trays went round, and along the sides thereof were guests dragged hither by him who had dragged me, and moulded in my mould, who were culling (enjoying) the fruit of winter and rejoicing with the glee of those endowed with youthful vigour. So I joined the place where they warmed themselves, and found with them the pleasure which the inebriated finds in wine; and when embarrassment had passed way and the cold was gone, trays were brought to

us like lunar halos in roundness, and like gardens adorned with flowers which were laden with the victuals of festive banquets, and well fenced against [the fault-finding or cavil of] the blamer and caviller [or fault-finder]. Then we spurned what is said about gluttony, and saw sense in plunging into it, until, when we had meted to ourselves with the measure of the greedy and come nigh the risk of indigestion, we had handed to us napkins to wipe off the odour of food, whereupon we settled in the seats of night-talk and every one of us began to wag his tongue and to display what he had in his show-case, except an old man whose side-locks were hoary, both whose upper garments were tattered, for he crouched apart and kept far aloof from us. So his reserve, the motive for which was incomprehensible, and which would have excused anyone who censured him, angered us, save that we softened our speech to him and were afraid to encroach on him by questioning, and each time we wished him to overflow as we overflowed, and to launch out in what we launched out, he turned aside as the lofty turns aside from the lowly and quoted: "Verily this is nought but idle tales of the ancients" (Koran, vi. 25, and *passim*). Presently it was as though shame had smote him, and the forbidding soul had whispered to him, for he crept up and came nigh, putting away his fastidiousness and exerting himself to make amends for what had gone before. Then he begged a hearing from the night-talkers, and broke forth like the coursing torrent, saying:

"Marvels I know, seen by me, and told without any lie, for not in vain a I called the father of wonder ent:

Folks have I seen, O y folk, that on a crone's juice are fed; not, notice well, mean I thou h the daughter of grapes by her.

(*bauli 'l-'ajûz*, lit. *urina anus*, is a popular idiom for "cow's milk", *al-'ajûz*, old woman, means also "choice old wine.")

And Arabs, at famine's time, who relished as dainty food, a roasted rag, and allayed indeed therewith hunger's pangs;

(*khuqûh*, a tatter, a rag, and also a swarm of locusts.)

And powerful men I saw, who said when things went amiss, or when they did carelessly their work: 'It was fuel's fault';

(*qâdir*, who is able, strong, powerful, and also "who cooks food in the kettle," *qidr*, when it is called *qadîr*.)

And scribes whose hands never wrote a letter in all their lives, and who read not any more aught of what is writ in books;

(*kâtib*, one who writes, a clerk, a scribe, and also "a cobler, a mender of water-bags," etc.)

And people who in their flight in eagle's wake sped along, although they were heavily arrayed in helmet and steel;

(*uqâb*, a black eagle, and also "a standard": Mohammed's standard was called *al-'uqâb*.)

And gathered folks, men of worth, to whom appeared suddenly a noble dame and they turned away, to flee far from her,

(*nabîlah*, a lady of distinction, and also "carrion," whence the phrase *tanabbala 'l-ba'îr*, the camel became putrid, i.e., died.)

And eke a troop, who for sure have never seen Mecca's fane and yet had made pilgrimage on camel's back without doubt;

(*ḥajjat jusiyun*, they performed the pilgrimage sitting crosswise [on their camels], and also "they got the better in argument in that posture," *jusîy*, being the plural of *jâsî*, one who sits crosswise.)

And women-folks faring from Aleppo all through the night who came to Kâẓimah-town at morn without weariness.

(*ṣabbaḥna kâẓimat-an*, they reached in the morning Kâẓimah, a town in the dependency of Basra, and also "they wished good-morning to a woman silent with anger.")

And people from Kâẓimah who faring forth during night found in Aleppo themselves about the time morning dawned.

(*aṣbaḥû fî ḥalab*, they arrived in the morning in Aleppo [far distant from the former town], and also "they passed the morning in milking.")

A youth I saw who for sure had never touched lady fair, and yet he had progeny to keep alive name and race.

(*naslun min al 'aqib*, progeny of surviving children, and "also an enemy at his heels.")

Again one hoary not hiding ever his hoariness, who in the desert appeared still young of years, far from grey.

(*shâ'ibun ghaira mukhfin li 'l-mashîb*, one hoary who conceals not the hoariness, and also "one who mixes milk [with water] and makes no secret of the milk thus mixed.")

One suckled with mother-milk, not lisping yet with his lips, I saw him in hot dispute amidst a brawl loud and fierce

(*fî shujârin baina 's-sabab*, in contention between arguments or revilings, and also "in an [open] camel-litter between the cords"; to the latter meaning of *sabab* Ḥarîri quotes Koran, xxii. 15: "let him stretch a cord to heaven.")

And one who sowed millet once, and when it came to be cut, it turned, for sooth, jujube shrub, which merry men dearly love.

(*al-ghubairâ'*, an intoxicating liquor prepared from millet, also called *sakrakah*, of which a tradition says: "beware of the ghubairâ', it is the wine of the world," and also the Arabic name of the plant *Zizypha rubra Gilanensis*.)

And one who was bound and rode upon a horse also bound, but never ceased all the while to fare along amblingly

(*maghlûl*, put in chains, fettered, bound, and *ghulla*, he was bound, have also the meaning "thirsty," and "he was suffering from thirst")

And one I saw, free of hand, who led a fine saddle-beast, in haste, although captive and a brother of isery.

(*ma'sûr*, one taken captive, ade prisoner of war, and also "one suffering fro strangury.")

One sitting, while walking, and with whom his beast fell aground, though strange it seem what I tell, yet it ad its naught of doubt.

(*jâlis*, one who is seated, and also "one who akes for Najd"; *mâshî*, a pedestrian, and also "owner of cattle," in which latter sense some commentators explain *imshû*, in Koran, lxvii. 15, as a prayer in behalf of ankind for abundance of cattle and prosperity.)

A weaver too, both his hands cut off, I saw, deaf and dumb, if this you deem marvellous, well, wonders will never cease.

(*ḥâ'ik*, a weaver, and also "one who in walking oves his shoulders, and keeps his feet far apart.")

One straight of build met I once, whose stature rose like a lance, on Mina ount, who complained to me of back-crookedness.

(*al-ḥadab*, being hu p-backed, and also "rough rising ground".)

One who exerted himself in giving all creatures joy, yet cheering the thought a sin like lying or tyranny.

(*ifrâḥ*, rendering cheerful, and also "burdening with debts," as in the saying of Moha ed: "There is none left in Islâ

burdened with debt [*mufraḥ*] whose debt has not been paid.")

And one who loved people to commune with him secretly, but never had any need for converse with humankind.

(*ḥadîsu'l-ḵẖalq*, conversation with created beings, and also "the telling of a lie," as in Koran *passim* "this is but a lying tale of the ancients.")

One scrupulous who redeemed always his word faithfully, lacked none the less conscience according to Arab ways.

(*ẓimâm*' conscientiousness, and also pl. of *ẓimmah*, "a well with scanty water," when the words translated "according to Arab ways" would have to be taken in the sense of "on the road of the Arabs," meaning in the desert.)

One full of strength, never was there yieldingness seen in him, his softness was manifest withal, and quite unconcealed.

(*lîn*, softness, smoothness, yieldingness, and also "a palm-tree or plantation," whence Koran, lix 5: "your cutting down some of their palm-trees.")

And one prostrating himself on camel's back, unconcerned at what he did, thinking it an act of prime piety.

(*faḥl*, a vigorous camel-stallion, and also "a mat made of the leaves of a male palm-tree" [*fuḥḥâl*].)

One who excuses, and pains him whose excuse he accepts, though coaxingly, while in screams is he who thus is excused.

(*ʿâẓir*, one who accepts another man's excuses, and also a "circumciser", *maʿẓûr*, one excused, and also "a boy being circumcised")

A town I saw, waterless for him who would scoop a draught, though water flows over it with torrent's rush many times.

(*baldah*, a city, town, district, and also "the space between the eyebrows," which is also called *buljah*.)

A village too, less in size than any nest built by birds, in which there lived Dailamites on plunder and robbery.

(*qaryah*, a village, and also an ant-hill; *dailam*, name of a people in Gîlân and extended to non-Arabs in general, and also "a swarm of ants"; *ḵẖulsatu's-salab*, sudden robbery, and also "bark of a tree.")

A star I saw, when it shows, a man is no longer seen, as though a veil covered him, a veil that naught penetrates.

(*kaukab*, a star, and also "a white speck in the eye producing blindness"; *insân*, man, and also metaphorically "the pupil of the eye.")

A ball of dung, highly prized as part of one's property, the owner though recks it not by any means much of wealth.

(*rausah*, the excrement of any hoofed animal, and also "the tip of the nose.")

A platter of purest gold, I saw it bought after much hard bargaining for a grain, a solitary silver grain.

(*nuẓâr*, pure gold, and also "wood of the *nab'* tree," of which trays, cups, bows, and similar objects are made.)

One gathering poppy-seed to ward from him off the foes assailing him, and he was not disappointed therein.

(*khashkhâs*, the plant called *abû 'n-naum*, father of sleep, *i.e.*, poppy, and also a troop of armed and armoured men.)

And oftentimes passed me by a dog in whose mouth there was a bull, but know ye, it was a bull without any tail

(*saur*, a bullock, a bull, and also "a piece of soft cheese.")

How many an elephant, I swear it, has seen my eye on camel's back, perched upon a saddle and saddle-bags.

(*fîl*, an elephant, and also "a man of weak intellect, a dolt".)

How many a man I met complaining in desert-tracts, and no complaint uttered he in earnest or pleasantry.

(*mushtakî*, one who complains, and also "one who uses the small water-bag, called *shakwah*.)

A pitcher I saw again, a shepherd's girl in the wold was owning it, and it looked with twain of eyes bright as stars.

(*karrâz*, a pitcher with a narrow neck [the Qâmûs reads the word in this meaning *kurrâz*], and also "a he-goat on whose horns a herdsman carries his utensils.")

How often times saw my eye two springs the water whereof, though in Aleppo they were, was flowing from farthest West.

(*al-gharb*, the distant West, applied to Maghrib or West Africa, and also "the lachrymal gland"; *'ain*, a fountain, source, spring, and also "the eye.")

And one who pierces with spears, although his hands never held a lance, and he never leaped against a foe charging him.

(*qanâ*, pl. of *qanât*, a lance, a spear, and also "an aquiline nose," applied to which *ṣada'a-hu* means "he disclosed or uncovered it.")

How many times came I to a land without any palms, and on the morrow I saw dates newly grown in their sheaths.

(*busr*, dates beginning to ripen, and also "rain-water lately fallen"; *qulub*, pl. of *qalb*, pith of the palm-tree, and also of *qalîb*, "a well.")

How often a spacious tray in desert tracts have I seen, that in the air was on wing and swooping down from on high.

(*tabaq*, a large tray, and also "a swarm of locusts.")

How many old en I saw that lived in this world for aye, and who, I ask you, escaped destruction at any time?

(*mukhallad*, one who lasts eternally, and also "one whose hoariness is slow to come.")

How many wild beasts I met complaining of hunger's pangs with fluent speech and a tongue more piercing than cutting swords.

(*wahsh*, a dumb brute, a wild beast, and also "a famished man.")

How often one who had eased his bowels called me and talked to me, and nor he nor I in manners were lacking aught.

(*mustanjî*, one who cleans himself after evacuation, and also one who sits on an elevated place [*najwah*].)

How oft I made kneel my beast beneath a pomegranate-bud that would have shaded no end of 'Ajam [*i.e.*, foreign] and Arab men.

(*junbuzah*, the flower or bud of a pomegranate, a bud in general, and also "a dome, a cupola"; *'urub*, here probably by poetical license for *'ub*, Arabs, may also be taken as pl. of *'arûb*, "a woman fond of her husband," as in Koran, lvi. 36: "loving their spouses, of equal age with them.")

How oft I saw one rejoiced a little while, and his tears were seen to fall freely as the drops of rain from a cloud.

(*surra*, he was filled with joy, and also "his navel-string was cut," the remaining part being called *surrah*, navel.)

How often times have I seen a shirt that hurt badly hi who owned it maiming his li bs, unnerving him thoroughly.

(*qamîṣ*, a shirt or vest, and also "a beast given to jumping and rearing.")

How any a veil there is, if time but would ake away with it, I trow numerous wayfarers would stay at home.

(*izâr*, a wrapper or veil covering the upper part of the body, and also used metaphorically for "woman.")

So far, and how any more of wondrous arts owns y mind, and sallies of pleasing wit, and sayings choice, sweet to hear.

So if you are quick to seize the drift of words, you will find that all is true and my bloom leads you to guess at my fruit.

But if you are baffled, then the fault, forsooth, lies with him who knows not how to discern 'twixt sandal and common wood."

Said Al Ḥarîth, son of Hammâm: Then we began to

grapple with his verse, and the explanation of the riddles proposed by him, while he made game of us as the careless makes game of the perplexed, saying : "It is not thy nest, so get thee gone!" until the birth proved too difficult and the debarment complete. Therefore we thrust the lead on him, and asked him for enlightenment, and we were suspended between hope and despair, he saying : "The coaxing before the call for milking." So we knew him to be one of those who want a return for their gift, and expect a bribe for their judgment. Now it galled him who had given us shelter, that we should be exposed to a mulct, or ignominiously frustrated; accordingly the lord of the mansion sent for a camel of the breed of 'Id, and a robe like Sa'îd's, and said to him : "Take them both as a lawful property, and levy not from my guests [even] a trifle for a forfeit." Said he : "I testify that this is a disposition like Akẖzam's and liberality like Ḥâtim's." Thereupon he approached us with a countenance whose serenity was translucent and whose brightness beaming, and said : "O my people, the night is well-nigh gone, and drowsiness has got the victory, so betake yourselves to the sleeping-places, and snatch the repose of the sleeper, so that ye may sip a draught of refreshing rest and rise invigorated, when ye will understand that which is explained to you, and things difficult will become easy." Then every one approved of his opinion, and laid himself down on the pillow of his slumber. Now when the lids were closed in sleep and the guests had fallen a-doze, he sprang to the camel, and straightway saddled her ; then he mounted her and started her on the journey, saying, addressing her :

"Serûj, my camel, is thy goal, so fare apace, now through the night, now through the day, now day and night,

So that thy hoofs may gladly tread her pastures moist and thou mayst find thee thence well off and prosperous,

And safe of being jaded over hill and dale: ay haste thee on, y precious beast, and speed thy pace,

Crossing the flinty mountains, peak by peak, contented with a chance draught from the wat'ring pond,

And not alighting until yonder goal is reached; for I have sworn it, and in earnest made my oath

By worship due to Mecca's lofty-pillared house, if thou but bring me safely to my native town

Thou wilt for aye be held by me instead of child."

Said the narrator: Then I knew that it was the Serûji, who when he had sold out, was wont to start off, and when he had filled his bushel, to decamp, and as soon as the dawn of the morrow broke and the sleepers recovered from their sleep, I informed them that at the time when unconsciousness had overcome them, the Shaykh had given them the slip for good, and mounted his camel and departed. Then a fresh vexation took hold of them after vexations of old, and they forgot the good of him for his bad. Thereupon we disbanded in all directions, and went away under every star of heaven.

THE FORTY-FIFTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF RAMLAH."

Once more Abû Zayd appears, together with his young wife, in a Court of Justice, this ti e that of the Kadi of Ramlah, on the plea of seeking redress for their matri onial grievances. The first instance of their quarrels w contained in the ninth Assembly, and Rückert, in his free translation, or rather imitation of Harîri in Ger an, has very skilfully interwoven the two co positions into one. The same subject we have seen treated from a different point of view in the fortieth, called "of Tebriz," and as both the ninth and

fortieth are much more elaborate than the present one, it seems to me highly probable that this Assembly is what we would call the first sketch or preliminary study to the two former, which he ay have thought fit to insert here, among some of the most artificial and carefully finished of his compositions, because its comparative simplicity and soberness endows it with a particular charm of its own by way of contrast.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I had gathered it from men of experiences, that travel is a mirror of marvels, wherefore I ceased not crossing every desert, and braving every danger, so that I might bring into my reach everything wonderful. Now amongst the finest sights I ever enjoyed, and the strangest adventures that I reckoned pleasant, was that I found myself in the presence of the Kadi of Ramlah,—and he one of the lords of wealth and power,—when there had appealed to him a worn wight in worn raiment, and a fair one in faded finery. The old man was minded to speak, and explain the object of his suit, but the wench cut short his peroration, and checked his bark. Then she removed from her face the flap of kerchief and indited with the tongue of an impudent shrew:

"O Kadi of Ramlah, in whose hands there is for us the date or else the hot cinder-coal,

To thee complain I of my ate's cruelty, who pays his pilgrim's duty but once a while:

Would that, when his devotion has come to end, and eased his back is after his pebble-throw,

He followed Abû Yûsuf's wise rule and wont to join the lesser with the chief pilgrimage.

This is his way in spite of that since he first took e to him I never crossed him in aught.

So bid him show me henceforth sweet kindliness, or make him drink the bitter draught of divorce,

Before he puts from him the last shred of shame, obedient to old Abû 'l-Murrah's hest."

Then the Kadi said to him: "Thou hast heard what she lays at thy door and with what she threatens thee, so turn aside from that which disgraces thee and beware to anger her and come to grief." Thereupon the Shaykh crouched on his knees and poured forth the springs of his utterances, saying:

"Listen, thou whom no blame may reach, to the speech of one who clears himself of doubts cast on him:

By Allah, not from hatred turn I from her, nor has my heart's love for my spouse died away,

But fortune's fitful freak has come over us, ruthlessly robbing us of both pearl and bead.

So my abode is empty, as unadorned her neck you see by shell or gold ornament.

Erewhile my views on love and his creed and cult were those professed so staunchly by 'Uẓrah's tribe,

But since fell fortune fled I left dolls alone, like one who vows chastity for caution's sake,

And not from grudge held I aloof from my field, only from fear to see the seed spring in halm.

So blame not one who in such plight finds himself, rather be kind to hi and bear with his talk."

Said the narrator: Then the woman flared up at his speech and unsheathed arguments to fight him, saying: "Woe betide thee, thou fool, thou lack-food and lack-a-lance, makest thou a fuss about a child, when for every grazing creature there is a pasture-ground? Forsooth, thy understanding has strayed, and thy arrow missed its aim: thou art a wretch, and thy spouse is wretched through thee." Said the Kadi to her: "As for thee, if thou wert to wrangle with Khansâ', she would go away from thee silenced, but as for him, if he is truthful in his assertion and his alleged poverty, there is enough in his concern for his growling entrails, to make him forget his pendulum." Then she dropped her head,

looking askance, and returning no reply, so that we said, shame has come back to her, or victory has encompassed her. Then the Shaykh said to her: "Out on thee, if thou hast tinselled thy speech or concealed that which is full well known to thee." Said she: "Alas, is there concealment after appeal, and remains to us a seal upon any secret? There is neither of us, but says that which is true and tears the veil of modesty in speaking out: so would that we had been visited with dumbness, and not repaired to the judge." Thereupon she covered herself with her kerchief, and pretended to weep at her exposure. But the Kadi began to wonder at their address, and to admire it, and to blame fortune and lament over it on their behalf, whereupon he brought forth of dirhems two thousand, saying: "Content therewith the two hollows, and resist the mischief-maker between two friends." So the twain thanked him for the handsome way in which he had dismissed them and departed [as united] as though they were wine and water. After they had gone, and their persons were at a distance, the Kadi began to praise their cultured minds, and to ask: "Is there anyone who knows them?" Then the foremost of his henchmen and the most particular of his intimates said to him: "As for the Shaykh, he is the Serûji, to whose excellence all the world witnesses, and as for the woman she is his travelling consort, but as for their litigation, it is a wile of his device, and one of the hunting-nets of his deceit." The Kadi was angered at what he heard, and burned with rage to see how he was cheated. Accordingly he said to the informer against them: "Get thee up, and

spy for the pair of them, then pursue and chase them." So he rose, shaking his limbs defiantly, and after a while he returned, defeated. Said the Kadi to him: "Let us know what thou hast unearthed, and conceal not from us aught of vileness thou hast found out." He replied: "I ceased not following up the roads, and trying to overcome all obstructions, until I perceived them entering the desert, and they had already bridled the beast of separation, when I excited their eagerness for a second draught, and pledged myself for their obtaining [the object of] their hope; but the Shaykh's heart was disposed to take a despairing view of the case, and said: "Flight with Kurâb (name of a celebrated horse) is wiser," while she said: "Nay, rather the return is praiseworthier, and cowardice is weakly." Now when the Shaykh saw clearly the foolishness of her notion, and the risk of her venturesomeness, he took hold of her skirts, whereupon he indited, saying to her:

"Take my advice, and follow its guarded way, and let the sum suffice thee for details:

Fly from the date-tree when thou hast had thy pick, and separate for good from it henceforth,

Bewaring to return to it even though its keeper made it free to all comers,

For best a thief should not be seen in a spot where he has given proof of his cunning."

Whereupon he said to me: "Thou hast taken trouble in that which thou hast been bid to do: so return to whence thou hast come, and say to him who has sent thee, if thou wilt:

"Eh, gently, let not bounty be followed by injury, for else both thy wealth and fa e alike will be lost and gone,

And fly not into passion if a beggar exaggerates, for he is by no means first to polish and gloss his speech,

And if some deceit of mine is taken by thee amiss, remember, Abû Mûsá before thee has been deceived."

Said the Kadi to him: "Allah confound him! how charming are his ways and how exquisite his arts!" Then he sent off his spy with two mantles and a purse full of coin, saying to him: "Fare speedily like one who turns neither right nor left, until thou seest the Shaykh and the wench, and moist their hands with this gift, and show to them how fain I am to be beguiled by the learned." Quoth the narrator: Now in all my wanderings abroad, I never saw a sight as wonderful as this, nor heard I the like of it from anyone who roved about and roamed through the lands.

THE FORTY-SIXTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF ALEPPO."

After a prolonged stay in Aleppo, Hârith passes on his return journey through Ḥi s (Emessa), a place noted for the stupidity of its inhabitants, like Abdera among the Greeks, or Schildburg in Germany. Here he meets with a schoolmaster, instructing, in the open air, his pupils, and, expecting to be entertained by the blunders of teacher and disciples, he draws near to assist at the lesson or class, as we would term it, when he finds to his astonish ent that the lads are able to accomplish the most surprising feats. "One of them," to quote once more Mr. Chenery's succinct summary, "recites a poem consisting entirely of unpointed letters; the next writes out so e which not only have every letter pointed, but are full of assonances and alliterations; a third produces lines of which the words consist alternately of pointed and unpointed letters; a fourth gives verses in which there is *tejnîs*, or homogeneity in sound or in letters between each two successive words; the next produces a couplet each line of which begins and ends with the sa e syllables. Then the nature of the exercises changes, and some lines are given containing words which ought to be written with the letter Sîn, but

about which some Arabs are doubtful. Then come the words which should be written with Ṣâd; then those that may be written with either. One pupil gives in verse the rules for writing the verb whose last letter is weak. Another repeats a poem comprising all the words in the language which contain *ẓ*, this table is especially useful since a common mistake among the Arabs was to confound *z* with *ẓ* [Chenery gives the two letters in Arabic characters, but would transliterate the second one by *d̤*, as in "Tumâḍir," vol. i., p. 387], the old Semitic language having a less variety of sounds than the cultivated Arabic, as may be seen by a comparison with the Hebrew. It need not be said that the schoolmaster is Abû Zayd."

The linguistic artifices mentioned above, like those which have preceded in former Assemblies, defy the resources of the translator. Ruckert, in his spirited and ingenious imitation of Harîri, substitutes similar feats in German, giving for instance a number of verses, in which the sounds respectively of *g* and *ch* (as pronounced in Scotch) change entirely the meaning of certain words; another piece, in which the leading words are only distinguished by *d* and *t* alternately, a third, in which the meaning of words is altered by eliminating the letter *s*, and so on, with an astonishing amount of inventiveness. My less ambitious object being to render the Original into English as faithfully as the difference between the two idioms will allow, I had to content myself, like Chenery in similar cases before me, with simply translating the wording of the text. The memorial verses on Arabic orthography, however, I have tried in a certain measure to reproduce because I thought that it might be a useful exercise for the student to learn them by heart. The insertion of Arabic vocables in transliteration of needs increased the number of lines in these pieces, and, as the last of them is rather long, I give only half of it in full for fear of exhausting the patience of the general reader, relegating the remainder of the words, together with their explanation, to the Notes.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: An overpowering longing and a most ardent desire carried me to Aleppo, and at that time my back was light and I quick of execution; so I took travelling gear and sped thither with the speed of the bird, and ever since I had put up at her dwellings, and was enjoying her spring

season, I ceased not to while away my days in all that which satisfies the wish and quenches thirst, until my heart had no longer power to addict itself to aught, and the raven of separation took wing after his alighting. Then my mind, free of care and sweet wilfulness [sprightliness], urged me to make for Ḥims (Emessa), so as to pass the summer in her territory and to sound the [proverbial] stupidity of the people of her soil. So I hastened towards her with the swiftness of the shooting-star when it falls to stone [the listening devils]. Now when I had pitched my tent in her boundary, and found the fragrance of her breeze, my eye spied a Shaykh whose old age was coming on and whose youth had turned its back on him, and around him ten youngsters of one root and of diverse roots, and I yielded to my eagerness to approach him, so that I might probe in him the learned folks of Ḥims. Thereupon he met me with a cheerful face and greeted me with [even] a handsomer greeting than I had given him. Then I sat down with him to test the fruit of his speech, and to fathom the essence of his clownishness. Forthwith he tarried not to point with his little staff to the oldest of his chicks, and said to him: "Indite the unadorned couplets, and beware of keeping us waiting." Then he crouched as the lion croucheth, and indited without hesitation:

"Make ready for thy enviers' weapons sharp, but kindly deal with hi who sets hope in thee,

Cut off thyself from play, avoid wantonness, but ply the camels and the brown supple spears,

Strive to obtain a lofty place, pillared high, not to enrobe thyself in gay dalliance,

For lordship means, by Allah, not quaffing wine, nor gain you glory courting girls full of hip,

Hail to one free of hand and mind, large of heart, whose only joy is giving joy to the good,

His water-pond is sweet to those seeking it, nor waste his wealth, when one in need begs for it,

Expectant hope is not refused at his door, and not put off . delaying hope deems he vile.

He follows not the call of loose sportiveness, nor is the winecup ever seen in his palm,

Stern discipline and self-reproof make him rule over his heart and master his lust and greed,

And praise he wins through knowing that one-eyed wives are not endowed alike with wives sound of sight."

Said he (the Shaykh) to him (the boy:) "Thou hast done well, O thou little full-moon, O thou head of the fraternity," whereupon he said to the next, who seemed to be a brother of the former, "Come near, O Nuwairah (my little luminary), my moonlet of the little halo." Then he came nigh and tarried not, until he was as close to him as the receiver of a gift, when the Shaykh said to him: "Display the bridal couplets, even though they be not of the choicest." Then he mended his reed-pen, and nibbed it, whereupon he took the tablet in his lap and wrote:

"Fair Tajannî has maddened e and bewitched e with her thousands of wily tricks and beguilements,

Has ena oured me with the droop of her eyelids, as a doe's, draining ine of tears through her love-charm.

She approached e, adorned and richly attired, and crazed my senses with forms that gleam through her ovements;

Then I fancied she favoured e and would soothe me by her speech, but an idle dream proved y fancy.

After using with me her heart's cruel falsehood, like one faithless, who would appe e rightful anger,

She forsook me, and let me go, softly weeping, and in sorrow that ceaselessly breedeth sorrow."

When the Shaykh looked at that which the boy had deftly devised, nd scanned attentively that which he

had written down, he said to him: "A blessing has been bestowed on thee amongst the fawns, as there has been a blessing bestowed on yonder olive-tree." Then he called out: "Step nigh, O Qutrub." Forthwith approached him a lad, resembling a star of a dark night or the likeness of an ivory-figure, whereupon he said to him: "Put this into mongrel couplets (the alternate words of which consist of dotted and undotted letters), and avoid blunders." Then the boy took the reed-pen and wrote:

"Be bountiful, bounty is a jewel, and disappoint none who hopes for shelter;
Refuse not him who implores assistance, be he prolix in his suit, or modest;
And think not that time will leave for ever the miser to starve upon his riches,
Be lenient: men of worth condemn not, their hearts expand with the joy of giving;
Betray no trustworthy friend and crave not for coin that, when tested, proves deficient."

Said the Shaykh to him: "May thy hands not wither nor thy knives get blunted." Then he called out: "O Ghashamsham, O thou [essence of the] perfume of Mausham." Forthwith there stood ready to his bidding a lad like the pearl of the diver, or the young buffalo of the hunter, when he said to him: "Write down the twin-couplets, and may no mishap befall thee." Then the boy took from him the straightened reed, and penned without stopping:

"Zaynab's stature, erect and lithe, kills beholders, and a bane is her rounded bosom to lovers,
Helping hosts are her neck to her, and her grace, and languid eyes that dart glances of deadly sharpness,
Proudly bearing herself she swayed full-blown power, now my foe, now with lowing cheeks drawing nigh me

In the morn or at night, to leave me again in sore distress at the cruelty of her doings,

Then she came, may I be her ransom, and cooed, and with her greetings appeased her lovelorn and loved one."

Thereupon the Shaykh began to scan carefully that which the boy had set into lines, and let his glance run over it, and when he had found his writing beautiful and his punctuation correct, he said to him: "May thy ten [fingers] not dry up, nor thy odour be found foul." Then he called a lad of bewitching looks, who [on removing his face-veil] displayed blossoms of a garden, and said to him. "Recite the two bordered couplets, that silence every speaker, and are sure not to be matched by a third." Said the boy to him: "Listen! and may thy hearing never become hard, nor thy collected senses be scattered," and recited without tarrying and without delay:

"Make thee a mark, whose traces show fair to sight, give thanks for gifts, though trifling as sesam-seed,

And shun deceitfulness with all ight and main, that thou mayst gain thee lordship and weight with men."

Said he to him: "Thou hast excelled, O imp, O father of despoilment." Then he called out: "Propound, O Yâsîn, that which is difficult of words written with Sîn." Thereupon he rose and tarried not to indite with a nasal voice:

"In *niqs*, which means 'writing-ink,' and *nusqh*, 'the wrist of the hand,' the Sîn is used whether they be written or read aloud.

"And so in *qasb* 'hard' (of dates), and *bâsiqah* 'lofty palm,' in *safḥun* 'foot of a mount,' in *bakḫs* 'defect,' *iqsir* 'force!'

In *iqtabis* 'borrow fire!' *taqassast* 'I heard it said,' *musaiṭir* 'custodian,' *shamâs* 'unbroke,' *jaras* 'bell.'

Qarîs, or else *qâris* 'cold'; learn this from me as correct, lighting thy torch at the fire of knowledge sound and approved."

Said he to him: "Thou hast done well, O unrest, O cymbal-beater of the troop." Then he said: "Get thee up, O 'Anbasah (a name of the lion) and explain the Sâds that are [vulgarly] confounded with Sîn." Thereupon he leaped up with the leap of the roused lion-whelp, and forthwith indited without stumbling:

"With Ṣâd is written *qabaṣt* 'I took with the finger-tips,' and *aṣiḵh* 'be listening that thou may'st receive the news,'

And *baṣaqt* 'I spat,' and *ṣimâḵh* 'the ear,' and *ṣanjah* 'cymbal,' and *qaṣṣ* and *ṣadr* 'the breast,' *qṭaṣṣ* 'he traced.'

Baḵhaṣt 'I gouged his eye,' and *furṣah* 'the proper time,' and *farṭaḥ* 'muscles beneath the ar that quake in fear.'

And *qaṣartu Hindan* 'I guarded Hind,' *fiṭru 'n-naṣârâ* 'paschal feast of the Christians who look out for it,'

And *qaraṣt* 'I pinched,' and the wine is *qârisah*, 'tart of taste,' when it pricks the tongue, and all this is orthography."

Said he: "Allah keep thee, O my son, thou hast indeed given coolness to both my eyne." Then he bade get up one small of body as a chess-pawn, and swift of motion as a falcon, and commanded him to stick to his way, and rehearse the words that are differently written with Sîn or Ṣâd. Then the boy rose, trailing his coat-flaps, and forthwith indited, gesticulating with both his hands:

"If so thou wilt write with Sîn, the words I will tell to thee, and if thou wilt, let them be correctly written with Ṣâd:

Maġḵs 'gripes,' and *faqs* 'breeding young,' *mustâr* 'new wine,' *mummaliṣ*

'Slipped fro the hand,' *sâḵġḵ* 'shedding teeth,' *ṣirâṭ* 'path of truth,'

Saqab 'approach,' *ṣâmiġḵân* 'the corners twain of the mouth,'

Saqr 'hawk,' *ṣawîq* 'wheat in broth,' *miṣlâq* 'glib-tongued': thus they teach."

Said he to him: "Well done, O thou mite, O thou eye of a fly." Then he called out: "O Daġḵfal (young

elephant), O Abû Zanfal (father of mischief)." Forthwith a boy stood ready to his bidding, fairer than an [ostrich's] egg on the green-sward. Then he said to him: "What is the rule with regard to the spelling of the verbs terminating in a weak letter?" He replied: "Listen, may thy echo never be deaf, nor thy enemies endowed with hearing," whereupon he indited, needing no prompter:

"If ever thou art doubtful of spelling a final weak, then put such a verb into the second of preterite:
If its Tâ is preceded by Yâ, let a Yâ it be, if not, put an Alif last, in order to write it right:
And think not that verbs of three or more letters of this class, or such as contain a Hamzah, will differ in that respect."

The Shaykh rejoiced at that which the boy had propounded, saying to him: "I commend thee to the protection of Allah from the eye of the envier, and fain would be made thy ransom," whereupon he said: "Hither, O Ḳa'kâ', O thou bird, cautious as to where thou sippest water." Then came forward a lad brighter than the fire of hospitality in the eyes of the son of night-faring. He said to him: "Explain the distinction between Ẓâd and Ẓâ so as to cleave thereby the hearts of the adversaries." The boy bestirred himself gleefully at his speech, and forthwith indited with a loud voice:

"Thou who askest about the two letters Zâd and Ẓâ, in order to make no error in writing:
Let suffice thee to know by heart those in Ẓâ, so hear the like a an wide awake and retain them,
Na ely *ẓamyâ* 'with blackish lips,' *al-maẓâlim* 'plaints for justice,' *iẓlâm* 'producing obscureness,'
Ẓalm 'the whiteness of teeth,' *ẓubâ* 'points of weapons,' *al-laḥâẓ* 'the eye-corner next to the temples,'
And '*aẓâ* 'kind of lizards,' and *aẓ-ẓalîm* 'ale of the ostrich,' or 'wronged,' and also 'the wronger,'

Ẓabyun 'antelope,' *shauzam* 'tall,' *ẓill* 'a shadow,' and *lazá* 'blaze,' *shuâẓ* 'a flame burning smokeless,'

At-tazunnî 'opinion,' *al-lafẓ* 'the word,' and *nam* 'a poem,' and *at-taqrîẓ* 'panegyric,'

Qaiẓ 'the summer,' *ẓumá* 'athirst,' and *lamâẓ* 'taste on the tip of the tongue,' *ḥaẓá* 'shares of fortune,'

An-naẓîr 'what resembles,' *ẓîr* 'foster-mother,' *jâhiẓ* 'goggling,' *an-naẓîrîn* 'the beholders,'

And *tashaẓẓî* 'a splitting up,' *ẓilf* 'the hoof of ruminants,' and *îqâẓ* 'awaking a sleeper,'

'Aẓm 'a bone,' and *ẓunbûb* 'the bone of the hip,' and *ash-shaẓî* 'bone of arm or leg,' *ẓahr* 'the backside,'

Ash-shiẓâẓ 'yoke for carrying,' *ḥâfiẓûn* 'those who preserve,' *ilfâẓ* 'provoking to anger,'

Al-ḥaẓîrât 'the lofts for dates,' *al-maẓannah* 'likely place where a thing is found,' *ẓinnah* 'notion,'

Kâẓimûn 'folks in silent wrath,' *al-waẓîfât* 'daily rations,' *mughtâẓ* 'enraged,' *ḥaẓẓah* 'surfeit.'"

Said the Shaykh to him: "Thou hast done well, may thy mouth never be harmed, nor he be benefited who speaks thee harshly, for, by Allah, thou art, despite thy tender youth, a safer keeper than the earth, and more of a collector than the day of mustering (resurrection). Now I have made thee and thy comrades drink from my pure draught, and have straightened you as spear-shafts are straightened, so think of me, and I will think of you, and give me thanks, and be not ungrateful." Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm: Then I wondered at what he had displayed of ingenuity blended with stolidness, and what he had shown of sagacity mingled with foolishness, and my glance ceased not to look up and down at him, and to scan and scrutinize him, but I was like one who tries to see in the dark, or who wanders in a trackless desert. So when he found my awakening tardy and my bewilderment evident, he blinked at me and smiled, saying: "There remains none who reads

features." Then I pondered as to the purport of his speech, when lo, I found him to be Abû Zayd by dint of his smile. Thereupon I began to blame him for making his home in a den of fools and choosing the trade of a clown. Then it was as if his face had been strewn with ashes, or imbued with blackness, save that he was not slow to indite :

"If Ḥims I have chosen, and trade as buffoon, it was to be blessed with the portion of fool-borns,
For *our* age selects but the fool for its favours, and houses its wealth in the pools of the hollows,
While brothers of wisdom obtain from their age not more than the donkey tied up in the courtyard."

Then he said : "But teaching is the most honourable of crafts, and the most profitable of merchandizes, the most successful of intercessions, and the most excellent of eminences, and its possessor is lord of a rule obeyed, and of awe widespread, and of a flock [subjects] submissive to his sway, he guards with the guardianship of a prince, and fixes allowances as a Wazîr fixes them, and ordains with the authority of the powerful, and resembles the owner of a great kingdom, save that in a short while he reaches his dotage, and becomes noted for far-famed foolishness, and shifts about with small wits in his dealings, and none can enlighten thee better [in this matter] than one who speaks from experience." Said I to him : "By Allah, thou art the son of the days and the pattern of patterns, and the wizard who beguiles understandings, who has access to every branch-path of speech." Thereupon I ceased not to attend at his assembly, and to plunge into the current of his river, until the bright days passed away and grey

events took their stead, when I separated from him with tears in my eyne.

THE FORTY-SEVENTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF HAJR."

Another lively scene of fictitious altercation between Abû Zayd, who for once has assumed the popular character of a cupper, and his precocious son, for the purpose of replenishing their exhausted pockets. The chief merit of the composition lies again in the marvellous forcibleness and comprehensiveness of diction, which runs through all the notes of the oratorial scale, from outspoken vulgarity redeemed by an amusing touch of quaintness in the numerous proverbial sayings, to the enouncement of sublime moral precepts in the most elaborate forms of versification To quote one instance of the latter, there is a poem of considerable length, the permanent rhyme of which consists of two words, consecutive words each time, of exactly the same sound, but totally different meaning, as. *Izá má 'ltahabat aḥshá'u-hu bi 't-tawá tawá*, "when his entrails burn with hunger (*tawá*), *he bears it silently*" (*tawá*). That Harîri himself attached some value and importance to this Assembly, may be gathered from the fact, that he accompanied it with a short commentary of his own, the substance of which will be found embodied in the notes to this volume.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I needed a cupping, while I was staying in Hajr al-Yemâmeh, and accordingly was directed to a Shaykh who cupped skilfully. So I sent my slave-boy to summon him into my presence and kept waiting for him, but he was slow to return after he had gone, so that I began to fancy that he had run away, or met with accident after accident. Then he came back like one who has failed in his errand and disappointed his master. Said I to him: "Woe betide thee, for the tardiness of Find, and thy fire-shaft missing to give a spark." Then he pretended that the Shaykh was busier than the woman of

the two butter-bags and in the midst of a battle like the battle of Hunain. Now I loathed to go to a cupper's place, and I was at a loss between sallying forth and lagging behind. Finally I saw that there was no rebuke upon him who goes to the privy. Thereupon, when I had reached his shop and got sight of his face, I perceived an old man of cleanly aspect, surrounded by ring upon ring of onlookers and throng upon throng [of customers]. Before him stood a youth like [the sharp sword] Ṣamṣâmah, about to be cupped, the Shaykh saying to him: "I see thou hast stretched forth thy head, before thou bringest out thy scrap, and hast offered me thy nape without saying to me 'This is for thee.' But I am not of those who sell ready goods for owed money, nor look out for the shadow after the substance. So if thou dole out thy coin, thou wilt be cupped in both thy neck-veins, but if thou deem stinting better, and hoarding more becoming in thyself, then read the Sura, 'he frowned and turned away,' and vanish from out of my sight, or else " Then the youth said: "By Him who has forbidden the forging of lies, as He has forbidden the chase in the two sacred precincts, I am more penniless than the babe two days old, so trust to the flow of my mountain slope, and grant me a delay until times have mended with me." Said the Shaykh to him: "Fair promises are like the shoot of a tree, that has an equal chance that it perish, or that the fresh date be gathered from it. So what will teach me, whether I am to reap fruit from thy tree, or to derive from it an ailment? Furthermore what relying is there that, when thou hast gotten thyself far away, thou wilt fulfil what thou promisest? For in sooth, treachery has become

as the whiteness in a horse's forefeet amongst the adornments of this generation, so rid me, by Allah, of thy bothering, and take thee off to where the wolf howls." Then the lad advanced towards him, overcome with shame, and said: "By Allah, none breaks faith, save the mean, the contemptible, and none resorts to the pond of treachery but the worthless, and if thou knewest who I am, thou wouldst not let me hear ribald talk; but thou hast spoken in ignorance, and where it behoved thee to prostrate thyself, thou hast foully aspersed, and how abject are exile and poverty, and how beautiful is the speech of him who said:

"The stranger, who trails his skirt pompously, meets but with scorn, how will he fare then abroad, if food and drink fail him?
But no distress brings disgrace upon the high-minded man: camphor and musk, well ye know, though pounded spread fragrance,
The ruby is often tried in Ghaḍa-fire's fiercest glow, the fire abates but the ruby still remains ruby."

Said the Shaykh to him: "O thou bane of thy father, who causest thy kindred to wail, art thou in a place to brag of, and of an account to be blazed forth? or in the place of a hide to be flayed, and of a nape to be cupped? And granted thy house be such as thou claimest, results therefrom the cupping of the hind-part of thy neck? By Allah, if thy father lorded it over Abd al-Manâf, or if 'Abd al-Madân humbled himself to thy maternal uncle, hammer not cold iron, and seek not that which thou wilt not find, and boast when thou boastest, of thy belongings, not of thy forefathers, and of thy gatherings, not of the roots from which thou springest, and of thy own qualities, not of thy rotten bones, and of thy valuables, not of thy pedigree. Yield not to thy ambition or it will abase thee [bring thee to fall], nor

follow thy lust lest it lead thee astray. I commend to Allah him who said to his son:

"Be upright, my dear son, for the straight tree will spread its roots, whereas, when it grows crooked it speedily pines away,

Obey not abasing greed, but behave as a man who bears in silence the pangs of hunger, that gnaw at his vital parts;

And battle against lust that destroys thee, for many who had soared to the stars, enslaved by lust, fell and came to grief.

Be helpful to thy kinsfolk, for shameful it is to see the pinch of distress in those depending upon the free

And keep to the friend who when the times turn their back on thee, betrays not, but proves faithful, when matters go wrong with thee.

And pardon if thou art strong, for no good is in a man who needlessly wounds, when power of wounding is in his grasp

And guard thee of complaining, thou hearest no man of sense complain, but the fool, who snarls and growls while he checks himself."

Then the lad said to the onlookers: "How wonderful! What a strange rarity! the nose in the sky and the rump in the water; words sweet as wine and deeds hard as flint stone." Then he assailed the Shaykh with a sharp tongue and in burning rage, saying: "Out upon thee for a fashioner of fine speeches, who swerves from the road of kindliness. Thou preachest benevolence and actest with the ruthlessness of the cat. And if the briskness of thy trade is the cause of thy crustiness, then may Allah strike it with slackness and allow it to be spoiled by thy enviers, until thou art seen more bereft of customers than the cupper of Sâbâṭ, and narrower, as far as thy livelihood is concerned, than the eye of the needle." Said the Shaykh to him: "Nay, may Allah visit thee with blisters all over thy mouth, and heat of the blood, until thou art driven to a cupper of mighty roughness, heavy in charges, with blunt

cupping-knives, snotty and breaking wind at every moment." Now, when the youth saw that he was complaining to one who would not be silenced, and intent on opening a door that would be kept locked, he desisted from bandying words and made ready for departure. But the Shaykh knew that he deserved blame for what he had said to the youth. So he felt inclined to pacify him, and vouchsafed to submit to his claim and not to ask a fee for cupping him. The lad, however, would not hear but of going and fleeing from his presence, and the twain ceased not from argument and abuse, and tugging each other about, until the youth quaked from the strife and his sleeves got torn. Then he cried aloud over his exceedingly great loss, and the rending of his honour and his rags, while the Shaykh began to make excuses for his excesses, and to quiet the other's tears. But the youth would not listen to his apologies nor abate his weeping until the Shaykh said to him: "May thy uncle (meaning himself) be thy ransom, and that which grieves thee pass over. Art thou not tired of wailing? Wilt thou not learn forbearance? Hast thou not heard of him, who exercised forgiveness, taking after the speech of him who said:

"Quench by thy mercy the fire of anger that recklessly a churl has kindled in thee, and pardon his trespass,
For mercy is far the best of jewels that grace the wise, and sweetest fruit, culled by an, is ready forgiveness."

Then the youth said to him: "Forsooth, if thou wert to look at my sordid life, thou wouldst excuse my flowing tears. But the smooth-skinned make light of what the back-sore feels." Then it was as if he became

ashamed, and he left off weeping, reg ining his composure, and he said to the Shaykh : "I have ow conformed with thy wish, so patch up what thou hast rent." Said the Shaykh : "Get thee gone ! thou overtaxest the flow of the streamlets of my bounty : spy for another's lightning, than mine." Then he rose to go from row to row, and begged for the gift of the standers-by, inditing while he was wending his way between them :

"I swear by Mecca's holy house, whither flock in pilgrim's garb the pious fro far and wide
If I possessed but food for one day, my hand would never touch the lancet or cupping-cup.
Nor would my soul, that craves for fair fa e with men, contentedly put up with this sign of trade,
Nor had this youth co plained of harshness from me or felt the lacerating prick of y sting.
But, lack-a-day, foul fortune's fell fitfulness, left me to grope my way in pitch-darkest night
And poverty brought me to such piteous pass : the blazing pit of hell I would fain prefer !
Is there a man then whom compassion i pels, and tender feelings pro pt to prove kind to me ?"

Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm : Thereupon I was the first to commiserate with his misfortune, and doled out to him two dirhems, saying [within myself], "They are of no account, even though he should be a liar." So he rejoiced at the first-fruit of his gathering, and augured well from them for the obtainment of what he needed ; and the dirhems ceased not to pour upon him, and to come to him from all sides, until he had become possessed of verdant plenty, and a well-filled saddle-bag. Then he cheered up at this, and congratulated himself on the event, saying to the youth : "This is a

spring-growth of thy sowing, and a milk-flow of which one half belongs to thee; come then to take thy share, and be not abashed." Thus they divided the money between them to the nicety with which the fruit of the dwarf palm splits in two, and rose in perfect agreement, and when the bond of conciliation was tied between them, and the Shaykh bethought himself of going, I said to him: "My blood is heated, and I had directed my steps to thee, so wouldst thou please to cup me and rid me of my ailment?" Then he turned his glance upon me and scanned me sharply, whereupon he came close up to me and indited:

"What think'st thou of my cunning and beguiling, and what occurred 'twixt me and my kid yonder?

That I come off as victor in the contest, and feed on fertile meadows after famine?

Tell me, my heart's core, tell me, pray, by Allah, hast ever thou set eyes upon one like me?

To open by my spell each fastened padlock? to captivate all inds by charm of witchcraft?

To blend the serious with the sportive humour? If Al Iskandarî has been before me,

The dew precedes the shower, but the shower excels the dew in fructifying bounty."

Said the narrator: Then his poetry roused my attention and made me perceive that he was our Shaykh, whom every finger points out. So I rebuked him for his lowering himself and stooping to self-abasement. But he took no notice of what he heard, and minded not my rebuke, saying: "Any shoe suits the bare-footed who walks on flints." Wherewith he stepped away from me contemptuously, and started off, he and his son, like two racehorses.

THE FORTY-EIGHTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "THE ḤARÂMÎYEH."

This Assembly, the first composed by Harîri, is based on a fact, which has been reported to us by two independent witnesses. Al Fajandîhi relates, that Ibn Qiṭri, who was Kadi of Al Mazâr, a town in the neighbourhood of Basra, had repented of his for er indulgence in wine, but relapsed into his sinful habit. One day he happened to be present in the mosque of the Benû Harâm in Basra, that is, of the quarter in which this Arab tribe had settled, when 'Omar founded the City, and here he was mysteriously moved to sincere penitence, which prompted him to ask whether any ember of the congregation could point out to him an atonement for his transgression. Then a stranger stepped forward, who claimed to be a fugitive citizen of Serûj, which had then fallen into the hands of the Greeks (here mistaken for the Franks of the first Crusade), and that his daughter had been made a captive by the enemy, from whom, in his destitute condition, he was unable to ransom her. He wound up by saying to Ibn Qitri: "Thy sin will be atoned for if thou bestow alms upon me, sufficient to set her free," and the Kadi, believing his statement to be true, presented him with twenty gold denars, part of which was forthwith spent by the rogue on wine in a tavern at a safe distance from the mosque. According to Abû 'l Ḳâsim 'Abdallah, Harîri's son, the latter, who lived in this quarter and is therefore surnamed Al-Harâmi, assisted at the scene and had previously to it, like the rest of the company, been uch i pressed by an eloquent address of the ragged stranger, who on their inquiry after his name, had called himself Abû Zayd the Serûji. Harîri went home and wrote the present Assembly, in which Abû Zayd is supposed to dictate his tale to Al Hârith, a for of narration subsequently abandoned by Ḥarîri, apparently for obvious reasons of clearness and stylistic conveniency.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related in the words of Abû Zayd: I ceased not since I bestrode my stout camel and departed from my spouse and my sprigs, to crave for the sight of Basra with the craving of the oppressed for help, since the possessors of knowledge nd the lords of tradition agreed upon the eminence of

her schools and scholars, and the glories of her tombs and martyrs, and I begged of Allah to make me tread her soil, so that I might feast my eyes on her, and that he would let me alight in her, so as to wander about her wards and outskirts. Now when good luck had landed me there and my glances pastured in her freely, I saw in her all that fills the eye with delight and makes every stranger forgetful of his native place. So I set out one morning when the taint of darkness was vanishing, and Abû Munzir was calling out his admonitions to the sleepers, to stroll about in her precincts, and to satisfy the hankering I had to penetrate into the midst of her. Then my traversing her roads and my sauntering in her streets brought me into a quarter noted as sacred and named after the Benû Harâm; that was possessed of Mosques much visited and of tanks much frequented, of buildings of solid structure and mansions of pleasing aspect, of choice excellencies and numerous rarities.

Thy heart's desire of holy things and worldly
thou findest there, and neighbours of motley tendence,
One all wrapped up in scripture's wondrous verses,
the other thrilled by tunes of the trembling lute-string,
One skilled in solving deeply hidden meanings,
the other bent on loosing the bonds of captives.
How any there, who wear their eyes by reading
or wear their trays by feeding the needy stranger,
How many places of resort for learning,
and seats of bounty, lavishing sweets of harvest,
And mansions where not cease from morn to evening
the warblings of the peerless aiden minstrels.
So join, if thus inclined, this one in prayer,
or, if thou wilt, that one in broaching wine-casks,
For there without restraint thou mayst indulge in
the wise man's converse or the toper's tankard.

Said he: Now while I was scouting her thoroughfares and gazing at her fairness, I perceived towards sundown and the approach of eventide, a mosque, renowned for its beauties, and deriving splendour from its frequenters, where the people assembled in it had started the discussion of interchangeable letters and were running a race in the course of debate. So I turned towards them, in order to ask for rain from their cloud, not to borrow light from their grammar-lore. Then it was not but as the snatching of a fire-brand of one in haste, that the voices rose for the prayer-call, followed by the sallying forth of the Imâm, when the blades of speech were sheathed, and the loops loosed for standing up, so that devotions diverted us from asking for food, and worship from seeking bounty. But when the due of obligatory prayer was discharged, and the people nigh dispersing, there emerged from the congregation an elderly man of sweet eloquence, who possessed of graceful gifts an easy flow of speech, and the fecundity of a Hasan. Said he: "O my neighbours, whom I have chosen before the branches of my own tree, and whose precincts I have made the house of my refuge, whom I have taken for my kith and kin, and made my stay for the time of my presence and absence, know ye that the vestment of truth is brighter than costly raiments, and that ignominy in this world is lighter to bear than ignominy in the world to come, that religion is the imparting of sincere advice, nd guidance the indication of sound faith, that the consulted has a claim to confidence, and that the seeker of right direction is e titled to be counselled, that he proves to be thy brother, who reproves thee, not he who finds for thee

excuses, and that thy friend in truth is he who tells thee truth, not he who says 'true' to all thou sayest!" Quoth those present: "O thou, our loving friend and cherished intimate, what is the secret of thy riddling speech, and what the explanation of thy concise address, and what desirest thou to be accomplished by us? For by Him, who has bestowed upon us thy affection, and made us the sincerest of thy friends, we shall not withhold from thee our advice, nor be sparing in our gift." Then he replied: "May ye be rewarded with good and preserved from harm, for ye are of those of whom a companion need not complain, and from whom dissimulation proceedeth not, in whom no expectation is disappointed, and from whom no secret should be concealed. So I will disclose to you what rankles in my breast and consult you on the matter that exhausts my patience. Know ye then, that while my fire-shaft yielded no spark and luck kept aloof from me, I was sincere in my purpose of covenant with Allah, and pledged my vow to Him, that I would never buy wine nor associate with boon-companions, nor quaff strong drink, nor don the garb of inebriety. But my misleading lust and my abasing and deluding sensuality prompted me to keep company with mighty topers, and to pass round the cups, to put away gravity and suckle myself with grape-wine, to bestride the back of the ruddy one, and be forgetful of repentance, as we are forgetful of the dead. Nor was I contented with this once, of which I have told you, in my obedience to Abû Murrah, but I was addicted to the old vintage even on the fifth day nd allowed myself to be thrown prostrate by the bright wine during the sacred night. Therefore behold me

contrite for my abandoning the way of return to God, and exceedingly penitent for my indulgence in constant drink, greatly in fear from the breach of my covenant and [illegible] confessing my excess in quaffing the fer[illegible] must.

Is [illegible]n atonement, ye know of, O friends of mine,
[illegible] from my sin me, and near to my Lord again ?"

Now when he had loosened the knot of his utterance and satisfied his need of complaint anent his distress, my soul whispered to me, This, O Abû Zayd, is an opportunity for catching game, so tuck up the sleeves from thy arm and sinew. Whereupon I rose from my roosting-place, as rises the alert, and sallied forth from my position in the row of worshippers with the swiftness of an arrow, saying :

Thou, distinguished by noble rank, great in glory and princeliness,
who desirest a guiding hand to the path of eternal bliss,
I a able to cure the ill, that deprives thee of peaceful sleep :
listen then to a wondrous case, fraught for e with perplexity.
Once I had in Serûj y home, seat of faith and of righteousness,
where obedience was paid to me for my wealth and my lordly state.
Throngs of guests were resorting to y abode and received my boon,
for with presents I purchased praise, kept y honour by bounty bright,
Caring naught that y treasures went in profuse liberality,
and I kindled the fire aloft, which the iser is fain to quench,
That the strayer ight find with me hoped-for shelter and resting-place ;
none athirst watched ..y lightning's flash and re..ained still a prey to thirst,
None, nor came one to borrow fire fro my shaft, and it failed to flame ;
while the times were in league with me spread I round me prosperity,

Till the Lord wrought a change in what through His favour had been my wont;
for He settled the Greeks in our country after a feud that rose,
And they seized on the households of all believers in one ...e God
and deprived me of all my goods either hidden or fre... iew.
Thus became I an outcast in distant lands and a fugiti...
who beseecheth men's bounty while ere it had b... ...it
of me,
And such misery is my lot, that it makes me to wish fo...
for the height of calamity, which has robbed me ...ny
cheer,
Is my daughter's captivity, who was captured for ransom's sake
cast a glance then upon my woe, and to help me stretch out thy hand,
Ay, protect me from fortune fell, that has wronged me and been my foe,
aiding me to redeem my child from the hostile's degrading bond.
By such acts are the sins wiped out of a servant who has rebelled,
is repentance accepted from one renouncing all worldliness,
And they are an atonement for him who, guided, has swerved astray.
though I spoke this in strains of verse yet my speech leads aright and true;
So accept the advice I give, and my guidance, with thankful heart,
and bestow what ...ay be at hand, winning praise from my gratitude.

Now when I had finished my long and rapid improvisation, and he whose help I implored, was satisfied of the truth of my words, his eagerness instigated him to display generosity in my assistance and zeal incited him to take trouble in relieving my distress. So he dealt out to me a ready dole forthwith and was profuse in ample promise, so that I returned to my nest gleeful at the success of my stratagem, for by fashioning my artifice I had obtained the sipping of my sop, and the weaving of my poem had gotten me the enjoyment of my pudding-pie. Quoth Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, "Then I said to him: 'Praise to Him who has created

thee, how mighty is thy trickery and how vile are thy inventions.' But he burst out laughing exceedingly and indited without hesitation :

'Live by deceit, for we live in times whose sons rese ble the forest lions.

Set aflow the rills of wile so that the mill of life may briskly turn round.

And hunt for eagles, if the chase should fail content thyself with a tuft of feathers ;

Try to cull the fruit, if the fruit escape thee, be satisfied with the leaves remaining ;

And ease thy heart from distracting thoughts at the frowns of fickle and adverse fortune,

For the ceaseless change of vicissitudes proclaims the doom of our life's unstableness.' "

THE FORTY-NINTH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF SÂSÂN."

According to most commentators, Sâsân, after whom this Assembly is na ed, was the eldest son of the king of part of Western Persia, who was disinherited by his father in favour of a daughter and her progeny, and fled in high dudgeon from his father's court, to lead the life of a nomad shepherd amongst the Kurds. Thus he beca e the *beau-idéal* of beggars and vagrants, and the hero of popular tales, like the "king of the gipsies." Others state that, under "the race of Sâsân," the Persian kings of the last Dynasty are meant, many of whose descendants were, after the conquest of the country by the Arabs, reduced to the utmost poverty and excited popular commiseration by their tragic downfall. Alluding to this prince of beggars or beggared princes, Abû Zayd urges his son to practise mendicancy as a fine art, which he hi self had found preferable to all other recognised means to gain an enjoyable livelihood.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related : The report reached me, that Abû Zayd, when he neared the (number of years indicated by the) clenched fist (ninety-three), and the fetter of old age robbed him of the power of rising, sent for his son, after having col-

lected his thoughts, and said to him: "O my son, behold the time for departing from the threshold and for having my eyes anointed with the kohl-pencil of demise has drawn nigh, and thou, praise be to Allah, art my heir apparent, and the leader of the flock of Sâsân after me, and for one like thee it needs no tapping with the staff, nor awakening him by the throw of pebbles, but he is called upon to exhort men's minds, and made to be a furbisher of their thoughts. So I bequeath thee that which Seth bequeathed not to Nabat, nor Jacob to the tribes. Preserve then my bequest and eschew disobedience to me; pattern thyself after my likeness, and ponder well my saws, for if thou be guided by my counsel and take light from my morning, thy alighting-place will be rich in herbs and thy smoke (*i.e.*, the smoke of thy fires of hospitality) will rise aloft, whereas, if thou be forgetful of my surah, and cast from thee my advice, the ashes of thy trivet will be few, and thy people and kin will make light of thee. O my son, I have tested the true states of things and experienced the vicissitudes of fortune, and have seen a man held worth his wealth, not his pedigree, and inquiry is made after his gain, not after his deserts. Now I have heard that the means of livelihood are ministry and commerce, and husbandry and handicraft. So I have plied these four to see which of them is the most fitting and profitable. But I have not proved living by them praiseworthy, nor found ease of life plentiful in them, for the opportunities of rulerships and the perquisites of administrations are like the entanglements of dreams and like the shadows vanishing with the darkness, and sufficient anguish for thee is

the bitterness of being weaned therefrom. And as for the goods of trade, they are subject to risks, and a butt to depredatory inroads, and how like they are to swift-winged birds. And as for the undertaking of farms and applying one's self to tilling the ground, it is a source of demeanment and a drag impeding advancement, and rarely is its pursuer exempt from despisal or blest with tranquillity of mind. And lastly as for the crafts of artisans, they yield not more than the merest pittance, and sell not briskly at all times, and most of them are dependent on the prime of life. And I see naught easy to win, sweet to taste, and in its acquirement pure of nature, but the craft of which Sâsân has planted the roots and diversified the branches, whose light he has made to shine in the East and West, and whose beacon he has kindled to the sons of dust. So I engaged in its battles, sporting its badge, and chose its mark as my ornament, since it is the merchandise that never slacks, and the spring that never sinks, and the lamp to which all resort and by which the blind and the one-eyed obtain light. And those who exercise it are the most powerful of tribes, and the luckiest of folks, no touch of oppression overtakes them, no drawing of the sword harasses them, they fear not the sting of biting vermin, nor submit they to anyone either near or far, they are not in awe of him who lightens and thunders, nor care they for him who (in his fretful anger) rises and sits down again. Their assemblies are pleasant, their hearts at ease, their food is sped before them, and their times pass brightly. Wheresoever they alight, they pick up, and where they slip in, they strip off, they make no country their home and fear no king, and they differ

not from the birds that are hungry in the morning and full at eventide." Then his son said to him: "O my father, thou hast spoken true in what thou hast said, but thou hast stitched together, not ripped open. So explain to me how I may gather in a harvest, and from which end the shoulder is to be eaten." Said he: "O my son, bestirring one's self is the door to it, and alacrity its array, and sharpness of wit its lamp, and pertness its weapon; be thou more on the move than the Qutrub, and travel swifter than the locust, be brisker than the gazelle by moonlight, and more aggressive than the tiger-wolf, rub the fire-shaft of thy fortune by thy effort, and knock at the door of thy sustenance by thy activity, cross every mountain-pass and dive into every deep, forage over every pasture-ground and sink thy bucket into every fountain, weary not of begging, and be not loath of exertion, for it was written on the staff of our elder Sâsân: 'He gets, who begs, he who roves, makes sure of his loaves.' But beware of sloth, for it is a presage of calamities and the garb of the indigent, the key of poverty and the germ of affliction, the token of weakness and folly, and the habit of the helpless, the dependent. He gathers no honey who has chosen laziness, nor fills he his palm who deems ease a smooth bed. So step boldly forward, though it be against the lion, for daringness of the soul gives speech to the tongue and freedom of motion to the rein, and by it eminence is reached and affluence obtained, even as cowardice is the twin of sluggishness, and the cause of failure, and a hindrance to action, and a disappointment to hope. Therefore it is said in the proverb: 'One who dares, fares well, he who fears, will

fail.' Sally then forth, my son, with the earliness of the raven, and the boldness of the lion, and the prudence of the chameleon, and the cunning of the wolf, and the greed of the pig, and the nimbleness of the gazelle, and the craftiness of the fox, and the patience of the camel, and the blandishments of the cat, and the diversity of colours of the humming-bird. Beguile by the gilding of thy tongue and deceive by the sorcery of thy eloquence; inquire after the state of a market before bringing thy goods to it, and coax the teat before milking; ask the travellers before visiting a pasture-ground, and make it smooth for thy side, before thou liest down; sharpen thy sight for taking omen from the flight of birds, and train thy perception for drawing inferences; for he who is right in reading characters will have the laugh for a long time, while the prey of him, who errs in his guess, will be tardy. Make, my son, thy burden light, and little thy dalliance, be averse to a repeated draught and content with a drizzle instead of a downpour, extol the value of the paltry and be thankful for a trifle, be not disheartened at a refusal, nor deem it far from possible that the rock should ooze, and despair not of the mercy of Allah, for none despaireth of Allah's mercy but the faithless. And if thou have to choose between a mite ready at hand, and a pearl promised thee, incline to the ready, and prefer the day that is to the morrow that is to be; for delay leads to losses, and intentions are subject to change, and promises are prone to be postponed, and between them and their fulfilment lie mountains, ay, what mountains! Display then the patience of men of purpose, and the forbearance of the considerate, shun

the harshness of one who exceeds bounds, and assume the habits of a cheerful disposition, keep tight the strings of thy purse, and blend lavishness with parsimony, hold not thy hand tied to thy neck, nor open it to its full extent. And when a country disagrees with thee, or a trouble has befallen thee therein, cut off thy hope from it and speed away from it thy camel, for the best of countries is that which betters thy state, and deem not departure burdensome nor hate removal, for the chiefs of our sect, and the elders of our tribe have agreed thereon, that motion is a blessing and the change of places like a promissory note, whereas they blame him who holds that peregrination is a bore and migration an infliction, and they say that it is an excuse of those who are contented with a paltry pittance and gratified with poor fruit and bad measure. But if thou have resolved on journeying abroad, and got ready for it thy staff and thy wallet, make choice of a helpful companion, ere thou settest out, for the neighbour before the house, and the fellow-traveller before wayfaring.

There is, my son, a bequest for thee, such as none afore was bequeathed yet,
One bright and fraught with the essence of choice rules and maxims that guide aright.
I selected them as a counseller sincere and earnest in his advice,
So act according to what I teach, as a wise and well-conducted wight,
That admiringly all people say: 'This in truth is yonder lion's whelp'"

Said he: "O my son, I have given thee my last behest and made it right complete. Now, if thou follow it, well done! but if thou trespass against it, out upon thee! And may Allah be my substitute with thee, and

I trust thou wilt not belie what I think of thee." Then his son said to him: "O my father, may thy throne be never brought low, nor thy bier uplifted. Thou hast indeed spoken true, and taught aright, and bestowed on me that which never yet father has bestowed on son, and if I be spared after thee, but may I never taste thy loss, I will forsooth mould my manners after thy manners, the excellent, and follow thy traces, the illustrious, so that it may be said how like is this night to yesterday, and the morning cloud to the cloud of even." Thereupon Abû Zayd rejoiced at his answer and smiled, and said: "He who resembles his father, wrongs not" (*i.e.*, his mother's fair fame).

Said Al Ḥarith, son of Hammâm: It has come to my knowledge that when the sons of Sâsân heard these beautiful mandates, they prized them above the mandates of Lokman, and learnt them by heart, as the mother of the Koran is learnt, so that they reckon them to this time the best that they can teach their children, and more profitable to them than a gift of gold.

THE FIFTIETH ASSEMBLY, CALLED "OF BASRA."

This last and crowning piece of Ḥarîri's work is remarkable in two directions, which both bring it in close relation to the forty-eighth. In the latter the author extolled in eloquent strains the quarter of Basra, which was inhabited by him; here he out-soars the highest flights of his oratory in a agnificent encomium of his native town itself. But the present Assembly is still ore admirable as a counter-part of that of the Benû Harâm with regard to the hero of the ro ance, who, having given there an account of an incident, which ominously inaugurated his questionable career, is now represented as redeeming, under the touch of divine grace, his life of

venturesome expedients, frequently bordering on crime, by sincere repentance and transports of pure and unremitting devotion.

Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm, related: I was one day wrapped up in sadness, whose brunt was fierce, and whose impress was visible in me, and as I had heard that resorting to the assemblies of invocation removes all veils from man's thought, I saw for the putting out of the live coal within me, naught but making for the cathedral mosque of Basra, whose chairs were at that time well filled, whose fountains were frequented, so that the flowers of speech might be culled in its meads, and the whir of pens was to be heard in its precincts. So I sped thither without delay and without swerving to the right or left, and when I had set foot on its gravel and got sight of its uttermost end, I espied a man in out-worn tatters upon an elevated stone, round whom throngs were crowded of uncounted number, and not engaged in child's work. Therefore I hasted in his direction and sought access to him, hoping to find with him the cure of my disease, and I ceased not shifting places, heedless of knocks and blows, until I was seated opposite to him, where I was safe of mistaking him, when, lo, it was our Shaykh the Serûji, no doubt in him, nor any disguise to conceal him. Then at his sight my grief subsided, and the hosts of my cares were scattered. But when he perceived me and glanced at the place where I was sitting, he said: "O ye people of Basra! may Allah keep and guard you, and strengthen your piety; how far spread is the fragrance of your fame, and how surpassing are the virtues that distinguish you; your country is the most eminent of countries in purity, the richest of them in

natural gifts, the widest in expanse, and the most fertile in pasture-grounds ; she boasts over them the correctest kiblah, the broadest stream, the greatest number of rivers and date-palms, the most exquisite beauty in detail and aggregate, being the gateway to the sacred land and fronting the door (of the Ka'beh) and the station (of Abraham), one of the two wings of the world, and a city founded on the fear of Allah, that never was defiled by flames of the fire, whose people never circumambulated idols, and prostrated themselves on her ground to none but the Merciful ; possessed of shrines much visited and of mosques thronged with worshippers, of schools far celebrated, and of tombs resorted to by pilgrims, of monuments revered and enclosed precincts. In it meet the ships and the saddle-beasts, the fish and the lizards, the camel-driver and the sailor, the hunter and the tiller, the harpooner and the lancer, the herd and the swimmer, and to it belongs the spectacle of the tide that rises and the tide that ebbs. But as for you, ye are of those whose excellencies not two contest, no enemy gainsays. Your community are the most obedient lieges to their Lord, and the most grateful for benefits bestowed on them. Your ascetic is the most devout of mankind, and the brightest light on the road of truth ; your scholar the most learned of all ages, and the supreme authority for ll times, and from amongst you came forth he who created and laid down the lore of grammar, and he who devised the measures of poetry, and there is no boast of man, but to you belongs the foremost hand in it, and the winning arrow ; there is no glory, but ye are the most worthy of it, and the most deserving. Withal ye

have Muezzins far more than the people of any town, and in worship ye observe the nicest rules, and from you pattern is taken in performing the ceremonies of 'Arafât, and became known the morning bounty in the sacred month, for when the slumbers are still and the sleeper is soundly asleep, there is heard amongst you a recitation that rouses the somnolent, and rejoices the wakeful, and the smile of morning dawns not, nor breaks forth its light in season hot or cold, but the prayer-call summons you with a murmur, like the murmur of the wind on the sea-waves. Wherefore Tradition has disclosed concerning you, and the Prophet, be peace upon him, has declared aforehand that your murmur in the mornings would be like the murmur of the bees in the deserts ; honour then to you for the prediction of the chosen one, and hail to your city, though it be effaced and nought remain of it but an outline." Then he checked his tongue and put an end to his speech, so that their eyes glanced at him, and he was suspected of falling short, nay, taunted with inability to proceed, but he sighed the sigh of him who is dragged to execution, or whom a lion's claws have clutched, when he said: "As for you, O people of Basra, there is none among you but he is worthy of renown alike for learning and liberality ; but as for me, he who knows me—well, I am such, and the worst of acquaintances is he who injures thee ; but to one who knows me not, I will now disclose truly my character. It is I, who have fared in Nejd and Tihâmeh, in Yemen and Syria, in the desert and the sea, in deepest night and early morning. In Serûj I was reared, and in the saddle I got my training. Forsooth, I have entered

straits, and opened roads that were closed, and witnessed frays, and soothed tempers, and curbed the restive and pressed nostrils in the dust, and melted the frozen, and softened rocks. Ask of me the East and the West, the hoofs (of camels) and (their) humps, assemblies and hosts, tribes and squadrons, and gather clear tidings of me from the reporters of traditions and the story-tellers at night-talks, from the drivers of caravans, and the sharp-sighted diviners, that ye may know how many mountain-passes I have threaded and veils I have rent, how many perils I have braved and fights I have fought, how often I have beguiled the minds of men, and devised novelties and snatched opportunities, and made lions my prey, how many a high-flown I have left prone, how many a hidden one I have brought out by my spells, how many a flint I have ground until it split, and made spring its sweet water by my wiles. But there has passed what has passed, while the bough was fresh and the temple raven-haired, and the raiment of youth yet new ; whereas now the skin has withered, the straight grown crooked, the dark night waxed light, and naught remains but repentance, if it avail, and to patch up the rent that has widened. Now, I had been apprised by reports well supported, and by traditions authenticated, that on every day a glance from Allah, be He exalted, falls upon you, and whereas all men's weapons are of iron, your weapons consist in prayers, and the profession of one God. So I repaired to you, jading my saddle-beasts, and travelling from station to station, until I stood in this place before you, though thereby no obligation be laid upon you, since I sped not hither but for my own need, and toiled not but for my

own tranquillity, and I crave not your gifts, but beg for your prayers, nor ask I for your wealth, but solicit your supplication. Pray then to Allah, may He be exalted, to accord me grace for repentance and readiness for my return to Him, for He is the Most High in dignity and answers prayers, and He it is who accepts penitence from His servants and forgives transgressions.

"Allah's forgiveness I crave for sins that, woe me! I have wantonly committed.

How oft I have plunged in seas of error, and morn and eve walked in paths of folly,

How oft I have followed passion's promptings, been arrogant, greedy and deceitful,

How oft I have spurned the curb in rushing headlong and unchecked to fell rebellion,

How oft I have reached the bounds of trespass, and never ceased from careering onwards.

Would that I had been afore forgotten, and never gathered what, alas, I gathered,

For better far death to him who sinneth, than to pursue such a course as I sped!

But, O my Lord, grant to me forgiveness: Thy Mercy is greater than my trespass."

Said the narrator: Forthwith the congregation commenced to aid him with their prayer, while he turned his face heavenward, until his eyelids brimmed with tears and his agitation became conspicuous, when he cried out: "Allah is greatest! the sign of acceptance has appeared and the veil of doubt is removed. May ye then, O folks of dear Basra, be rewarded with the reward of Him who guides out of perplexity." Then there remained none among the people who rejoiced not in his joy, doling out to him what he had ready at hand. He accepted the bestowal of their bounty, and began to expatiate in thanks to them, whereupon he

descended from the stone and wended towards the river bank. But I followed in his wake, to where we found ourselves alone and were safe of being spied and intermeddled with. Then I said to him: "This time thou hast done marvels, but what is thy view as to repentance?" Said he: "I swear by Him who knows all hidden things and forgives transgressions, my case is indeed a miracle and the prayers of thy fellow-people have been answered." I replied: "Enlighten me more, so may Allah grant thee more of welfare!" Said he: "Truly, I had stood before them in the stead of a doubter, a deceiver, and, lo, I have turned from them with the heart of the contrite, the devout. Weal then to him to whom they incline their hearts, and woe to him on whom they call down their imprecations." Thereupon he bade me farewell, and went away, leaving me in unrest, so that I ceased not tormenting my thoughts on his account, and looking out for means of testing the truth of what he had stated. But every time I sniffed for tidings of him from wayfarers and roamers in foreign lands, I was like one who talks to dumb brutes, or hails a mute rock, until after a length of time and reaching the pitch of anguish, I met with some travellers returning from a journey, to whom I said: "Is there any rare news?" Quoth they. "Indeed, we have news rarer than the 'Anḳâ and more marvellous than the sight of Zarḳâ." So I asked them for explanation of what they had said, and that they would mete to me what had been meted to them. Then they told me that they had made a halt at Serûj, after the wild asses had left it, and had seen there its renowned Abû Zayd, who had donned the wool cloth,

and was leading the rows of the praying and had become a famous devotee. Said I to them: "Mean ye him of the Assemblies?" Quoth they: "Yea, him now of all miraculous endowments." Forthwith longing urged me towards him, for I saw in him an opportunity not to be lost. So I set out in all readiness and made for him full earnestly, until I alighted at his mosque and the place of his worship, when, lo, he had discarded the society of his associates, and stood upright in his prayer-niche, wearing a cloak stitched together with a tooth-pick, and a patched wrapper. So I was struck with awe of him, like one who has broken in upon lions, and found him amongst those whose token is the trace of prostration in their faces, and when he had told his rosary, he greeted me with his forefinger without uttering a word of talk, nor asking for tidings old or new. Then he proceeded with his recitation from the Koran, and left me wondering at his devotion, and envying those whom Allah leads aright amongst his servants, and he desisted not from adoration and humiliation, from prostrating himself and bowing down, from self-abasement and contrition, until he had completed the performance of the five prayers, and to-day had become yesterday, when he betook himself with me to his abode, and gave me a share in his loaf and olive-oil. Thereupon he rose to enter his Oratory, and remained alone in converse with his Lord, until, when the morn shone forth, and the wakeful worshipper was entitled to his reward, he followed up his vigil with prayers of praise. Then only he reclined in the posture of the seeker of repose, and began to chaunt with an impressive voice:

"Good-bye, my soul, to memories
of vernal camps, and tryste therein,
And fond farewell to trav'ller fair,
yea, bid good-bye to them for aye.
Bewail the time that passed away,
when thou hast blackened pages bright,
And never ceased to steep thyself
in deeds of shame and heinousness.
How oft the night was spent by thee
in sins that none afore has dared,
From lust, indulged without restraint
on wanton couch, in chamber still.
How often spedst thou on thy steps
to unheard-of depravity,
And brokest repentance, slowly vowed,
in swift forgetting sport and play;
How often madest thou bold, O slave,
against the Lord of heavens high,
Not heeding Him and proving false,
ay, false to thy pretended faith;
How often flungst thou, like a shoe
outworn, aside His stern command,
Ungrateful for His benefits
and reckless of His tardy wrath,
How often, running pleasure's course,
and glibly speaking lies prepense,
Wast thou neglecting carelessly
the duties of His covenant.
So don the garb of penitence,
and shower tears of blood, before
Thy foot commits a fatal slip,
before thy fall has come to pass;
Humbly confess thy sins and fly
for refuge where the guilty flies;
Resist thy lewd propensities
and turn from them with purpose firm.
How long in thoughtlessness and sloth
wilt thou let drift life's better part,
To what brings loss as only gain,
and never check'st thy mad career.
Perceivest thou not the mingled hue
that streaks with hoary lines thy head,

Yet he whose ringlets blend with grey
  is warned of his approaching death.
Woe thee, my soul, redemption seek,
  obey, be true, be well advised,
Take warning from those gone before,
  in generations passed away,
And fear the stealing on of fate,
  be wary, lest thou be deceived.
Walk in the path of rectitude,
  for swift, remember, comes thy doom:
To-morrow will thy dwelling be
  the bottom of a lonely grave,
Alas, that house of sore dismay,
  that station, waste, disconsolate,
That goal of pilgrims of long syne,
  of countless pilgrims yet to come,
A house whose inmate will be seen
  encompassed, after ample space,
Within the bond of cubits three,
  to hold him in their narrow grip.
Who there alights, it matters not
  if he a wit be, or a fool,
If poor, or if possessed of all
  the riches of a Tobba' king.
And after it the roll-call comes,
  that musters timid wight, and bold,
And teacher and disciple, and
  the ruler and the ruled alike.
Then O the bliss of him that fears
  his Lord, and earns the thrall's reward,
Safe from the dread account and from
  the terrors of that awful day.
But O the loss of those who have
  sinned and transgressed beyond all bounds,
And kindled discord's blazing fire,
  for sake of worldly goods and joys.
O Thou, in whom y trust is placed,
  how grows my fear with every day,
For all the slips and falls that fill
    y ill-spent life with guilt and crime.
But, Lord, forgive Thy erring slave,
  yield mercy to his welling tears,

For the most Merciful art Thou,
and Best to whom are prayers raised."

Said Al Ḥârith, son of Hammâm : Thus he ceased not repeating these words in a low voice and mingling them with sobs and sighs, until I wept by reason of the weeping of his eyne, as I had wept heretofore anent him. Then he sallied forth to his mosque, cleansed by his night-wake, and I went in his track, and prayed with those who prayed behind him, and when the people present dispersed and separated hither and thither, he took to muttering his lessons and casting his day in the mould of his yesterday, while he wailed with the wailing of a bereft mother, and wept as not Jacob wept, so that I saw clearly that he had joined the seven saints, and that his heart was imbued with the love of seclusion. So I formed within me the resolution to depart and to leave him all by himself in this state. Then it was as if he had read my purpose or had revealed to him that which I kept concealed, for he sighed like one grief-stricken, after which he quoted (from the Koran) : "If thou make a resolution, put thy trust in Allah." Thereupon I testified to the truthfulness of my informants, and knew for certain that in our dispensation inspired ones are found. So I went nigh to him, to put my hand in his, and said : "Give me thy bequest, O servant sincere of counsel," when he said : "Keep death before thy eye, and this is the parting between me and thee." With this he bade me farewell, while the tears streamed from the corners of my eyes, and my sighs rose from within my entrails, this being the last of our meetings.